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William Schneider: The Reagan Cult Now

K.S. KAROL ON FIDEL CASTRO · MARK STEVENS ON JULIAN SCHNABEL

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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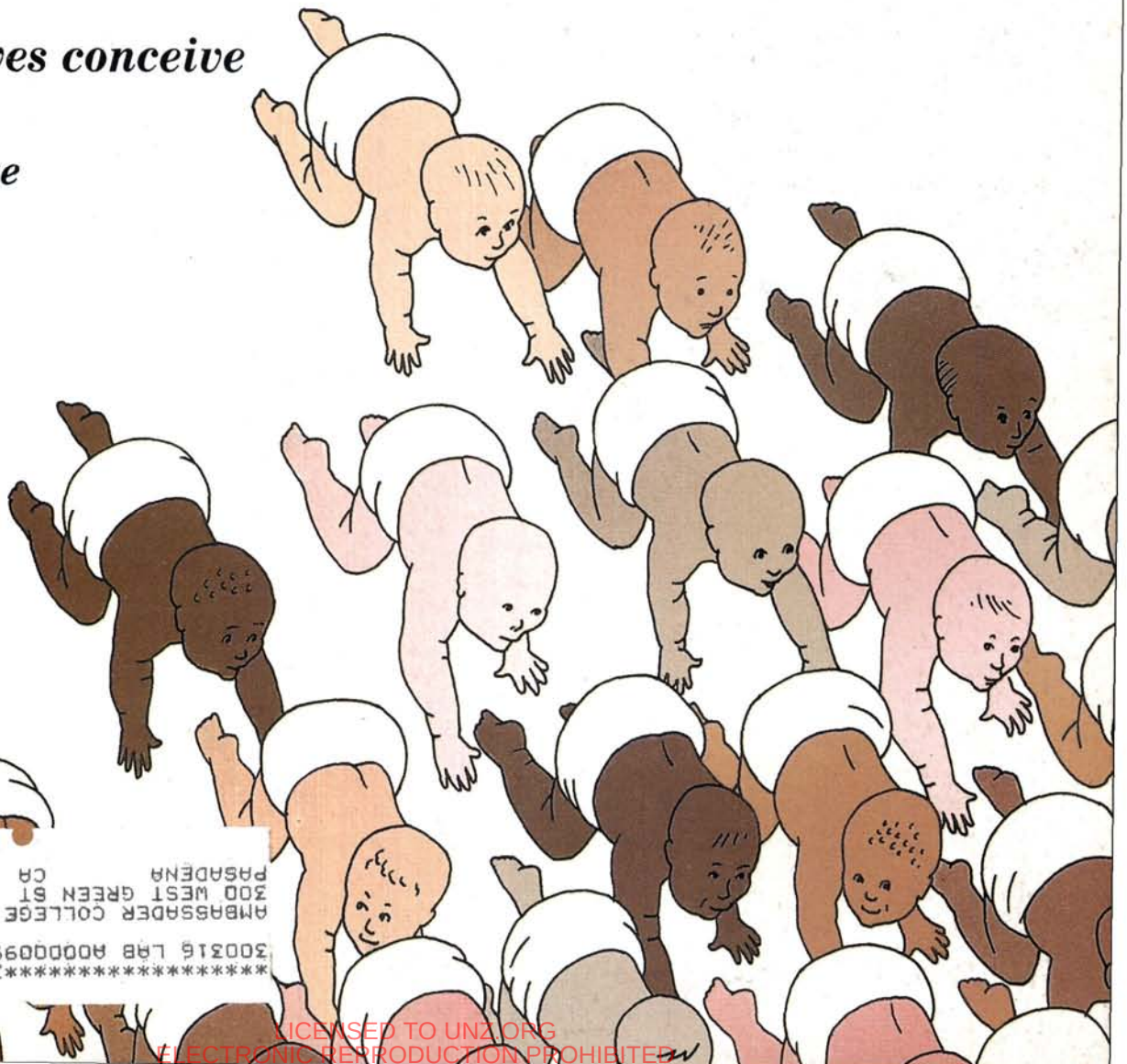
Are We Running Out of Babies?

Conservatives conceive a crisis

by Tony Kaye



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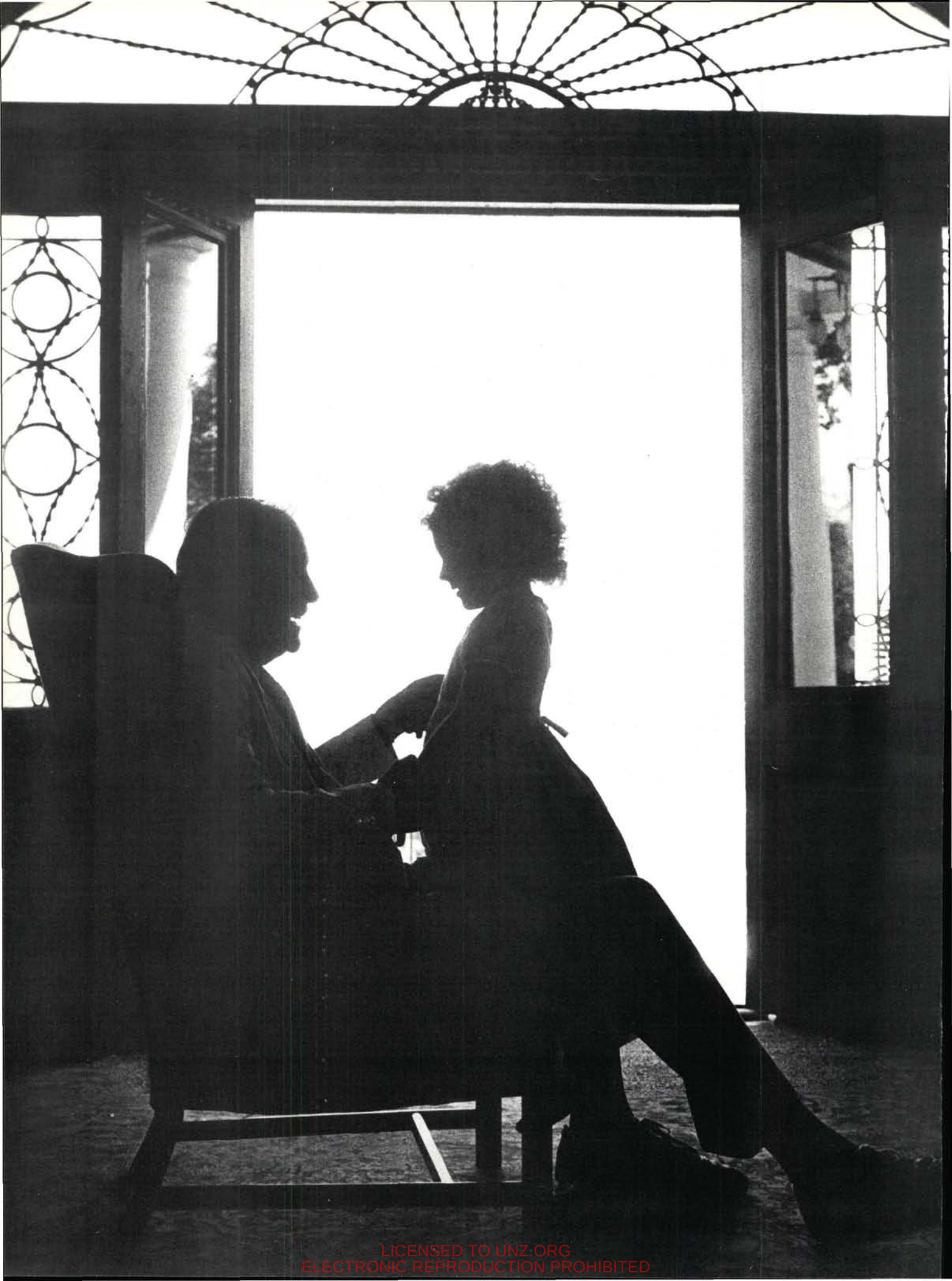

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FROM WASHINGTON

Doctors And Markets

The current debate within the Reagan administration about the future of Medicare illustrates the difference between worshiping the free market and understanding it.

The secretary of health and human services, Dr. Otis Bowen, wants to expand Medicare to cover long-term catastrophic illnesses. (Benefits now start to melt away after 60 days.) Bowen figures that an extra five dollars or so a month from each recipient would cover all medical costs over $2,000 a year. Administration budgeteers oppose Bowen's proposal on the grounds that it would replace private enterprise—the huge "Medigap" insurance market—with government bureaucracy, and lead to rising costs.

Meanwhile, the Office of Management and Budget wants to change the way Medicare pays some doctors by expanding the reform adopted in 1984 for hospital payments. Under a "prospective" payment system, doctors would be paid a set amount for each patient, based on the diagnosis at the beginning of treatment, rather than allowing them to charge separately for each service they provide. Bowen denounces this idea as a form of "price control." He and the OMB reportedly have reached a compromise, but lobbyists for his fellow physicians pledge all-out war.

Let's clear away some underbrush. In a limited but important sense, we already have socialized medicine in this country and virtually no one opposes it. That is, we have made a collective decision as a society that health care should be distributed on the basis of the Marxist principle "To each according to his need," rather than the capitalist principle of "To each according to what he can pay." Proof: No liberal politician would attempt to insist that poor people are entitled to eat the same sorts of food and live in the same kinds of houses as people who can afford better. But I dare any conservative politician to say publicly that the rich should get better health care than the poor. Even the right-wing Heritage Foundation, campaigning against Bowen's proposal, claims to favor the idea of universal catastrophic insurance coverage.

The problem, then, is not whether health care costs appear on the "government" or the "private" side of the national ledger. The problem is how to get ourselves the best care at the least cost. Market forces can be an important tool. But half of the ordinary case for "private enterprise" is missing. We want the production efficiencies without the distributional efficiencies.

Furthermore, the legendary efficiencies of private enterprise can never fully flower in health care. Insurance—both government and private—is the main reason. Whenever one person is buying and someone else is paying, there's not much fiscal discipline. But even without insurance, free-market competition can't work in health care the way it does in textbooks. How can any lay person judge whether a proposed treatment is necessary? Who is going to price shop for a brain surgeon? How many people even get to choose their own anesthesiologist?

In a way, we now have the worst of both capitalism and socialism. Despite our philosophical commitment to top-flight health care for everyone, millions of people aren't covered and millions more don't have enough coverage. Meanwhile, our increasingly government-financed health care system is bankrupting us.

The tender regard of Dr. Bowen's critics for the "Medigap" insurance industry that government catastrophic insurance might put out of business is a good example of misplaced admiration for the private sector. About 40 cents on each Medigap dollar goes for administration, profit, and marketing costs (such as payments to people like Lorne Greene and Danny Thomas for scaring old folks in television commercials). If we sincerely want universal catastrophic coverage, doing it through Medicare is clearly the most efficient way. No doubt the critics are right that universal coverage will lead to higher costs, but this will happen whether the insurance is public or private.

That's why cost controls are essential.

continued on page 42

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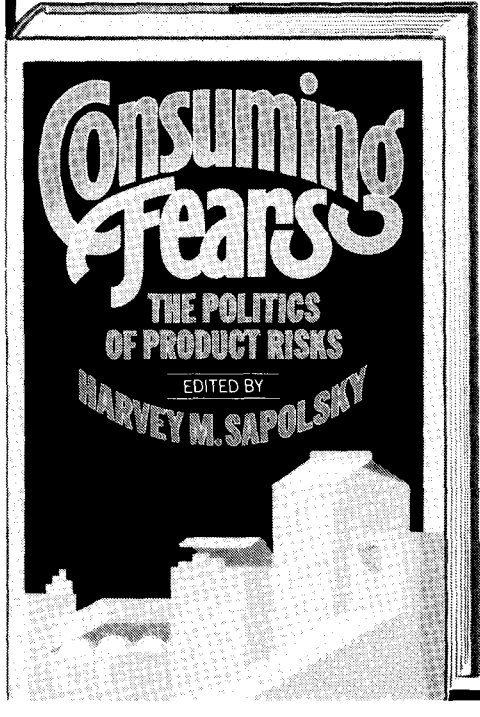

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CORRESPONDENCE

GLOATING, GUILT, AND GLEE

To the editors:

It is incomprehensible that you would print such a gloating, cavalier attack on the president and his administration (TRB, "The Case for Glee," December 22). Although mistakes were made in the conduct of affairs with Iran, it is impossible to understand how a responsible and loyal citizen could find such outspoken joy in this adversity. No one could possibly find anything constructive in your remarks, no matter how much he hated Ronald Reagan.

I can only conclude that the leftist press, the liberal establishment, and certain members of the Democratic Party are interested only in their own aggrandizement, regardless of the cost to our country. They care not that actions such as yours serve only to create internal dissension, provide nothing constructive toward resolving the matter, and make our disarray all the more embarrassing abroad.

ALFRED T. BOGEN JR.
Canton, Mississippi

To the editors:

TRB's outburst is probably the most revolting piece of journalism I have ever read. While he admits being afraid to attack Reagan during the height of his popularity, TRB offers little evidence to justify kicking him when he is down. Not only does TRB demean the office of the president by slandering its current occupant, he insults the electorate that put him there. His public gloating will probably only kindle support for Reagan. No one is going to gain popularity by attacking this very popular president.

JOHN POPHAM
Minneapolis, Minnesota

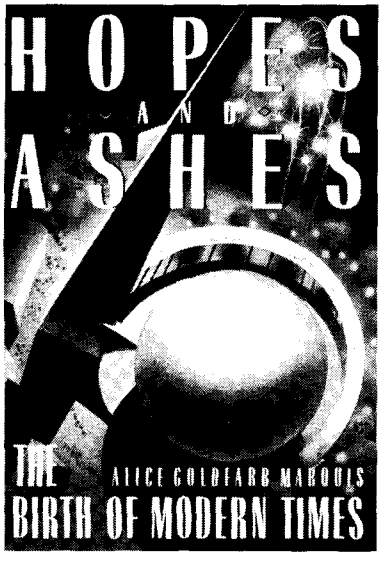
To the editors:

Thank you for your very welcomed TRB column . I too am enjoying the squirming of the current administration as they try to offer explanations for their reprehensible behavior. I cannot read enough about the collapse of the Reagan White House or cease watching every television news program. But in the midst of my glee I felt a pang of guilt and thought I was alone. Thank you for allowing me to come out of the closet. I haven't had a good laugh in years—six years to be exact!

PAULETTE KEFFAS
Kew Gardens, New York

Looking back at The World of Tomorrow

Despite the aftershocks of the stock market crash of 1929, America in the 1930s was a land of bright hope for the future. The thirties featured the birth of television, network radio, *Time, Life* and the creation of a dazzling World's Fair that depicted a sleek and breathtaking World of Tomorrow.



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THE PRICE OF FAME

To the editors:

Your article on me and "The Fame Game" (December 8) echoed many of my own thoughts since being released from prison. Leo Braudy is quite right: my notoriety, like my arrest, was totally undeserved. And there is a price to pay.

Undeserved notoriety brings heavy psychological discomfort along with book contracts and lecture fees. I have to ask: What have I done to deserve such benefits? Can I ever live up to those letters of admiration, or repay the outpouring of support from colleagues and friends? The answer is No. I am not a hero.

The media like to focus on individuals—and God knows I am grateful in this case, because I might otherwise still be sitting in a KGB cell—then everyone starts looking for flaws in their creation. I understand that. It is the press's role to look beyond the public image.

Fame, deserved or undeserved, reminds me of being interrogated by the KGB. It is a no-win situation. I put flowers on my great-great-grandfather's grave in Moscow and I am suffering from Slavic self-dramatization. I prefer not to do ads for Mickey Mouse and I am violating the distinction between "trivial" and "serious" fame. I joke with friends about "running for the Senate" and I am "losing perspective." So be it.

I am told a notice appeared in a rival news magazine's home office that said: "KGB! Next time, take one of ours." I would gladly put the clock back and cede the opportunity of sitting in a KGB cell for two weeks. Only time will tell if undeserved fame will compensate me for traumatic weeks as a Soviet hostage, and my current sense of loss at having been made persona non grata in a country I spent 30 years following as a journalist.

NICHOLAS DANILOFF
Washington, D.C.

CHOOSING THE RURAL LIFE

To the editors:

Jeffrey Pasley seems to be drifting toward an argument for doing away with

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JANUARY 19, 1987

RUMBLINGS

Do not underestimate the tremors that have convulsed the Communist worlds in the last two weeks. If they are not yet on a political Richter scale the equivalents of Polish October of 1981 and the Hungarian uprising of 1956, recent events in the Soviet Union and China nevertheless confirm that the crisis of Communist legitimacy has not diminished during the last generation. Time has not soothed the grievance bred by totalitarianism. It is true that many remain resolutely blind to that grievance, like the enthusiasts of revolution in Nicaragua. But those who must endure the economic paralysis, intellectual impoverishment, and spiritual depression of Communist societies know better.

Popular revulsion against the party state has long been amply evidenced in Central and Eastern Europe, and there have been hints of mass discontent within the borders of Communism's two competing metropolitian powers. Now this revulsion has taken to the streets—in Yakutsk and Kazakhstan, in Shanghai and Beijing, in other locales we know about and probably in many we don't—in what amounts to democratic vindication for all of the Andrei Sakharovs, noted and nameless, from the Elbe to the China sea.

The democratic maturity, sobriety, and sophistication of the Chinese students is especially surprising in view of their country's recent experience with a more virulent strain of totalitarian mobilization. The moral seriousness of these young people contrasts starkly with the self-indulgent French university students who also thought they had good cause to take to the barricades. Where in post-Mao China does this brave passion for democracy come from? Professor Allen S. Whiting notes in the *New York Times* that traditional Chinese values did not succor democracy. What persuades Chinese students to make a theme from Lincoln their credo?

Undoubtedly one source of the democratic hunger is the intrinsic logic of the regime's own experiments in capitalism. Capitalism doesn't require civil liberties, despite what its cruder pamphleteers say. But when aspects of the free market begin to supplant a tightly controlled economy and the test is widely seen as successful, it does create a momentum for freedom in other spheres of life. That is not what Deng Xiaoping and his comrades had in mind, though they have been willing for society to live on a longer chain than some of their Chinese critics had dared to hope. But even little freedoms are contagious.

Now the government is engaged in damage control. It must tread a narrow line, however: restraining the exuberance for democracy without smothering the spirit of initiative that has given vitality to the economy. The announcement that there will be two candidates for every seat on Beijing's municipal council will test whether procedural concessions can satisfy more substantial demands.

It may not. Despite a hard official hand and an even harder official line against further demonstrations, the young have been defiant, determined, and disciplined. This terrifies the regime. Hence its effort to stigmatize the young protestors as heirs of precisely who they are not, the Red Guards. Hence also the charge that the students are ingrates in demanding more when they have already been given so much. One widely quoted student rejoinder is both eloquent and truthful: democracy is not a gift from above, but a triumph from below. In its simple dignity, the rhetoric of these Chinese dissidents evokes the tragic heroism of Kyo in André Malraux's novel *Man's Fate* (though, ironically, they are in revolt against the very revolution he hoped for). Asked by a Shanghai policeman whether he wants to live, Kyo responds, "It depends how."

Something serious and rather different from the usual also seems to be going on in the U.S.S.R. But the American media have made too much of too little. It is important to remember that a press conference does not mean democracy. Is there some perhaps unconscious process at work in which the corollary of Ronald Reagan's diminished stature is the elevation in stature of his prime adversary? Gorbachev is not exactly "Opening A Closed Society," as the cover of *Newsweek* would have it. Jeri Laber of Helsinki Watch, appearing on the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," predicted protest movements in the Soviet Union against the war in Afghanistan like the American protests over Vietnam. Just how far we really are from seeing such events can be gauged from a sobering Op-Ed article in the

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Times by Robert Bernstein, chairman of Helsinki Watch, listing the numbers and names of prisoners of conscience who only recently have been "put away for merely speaking or writing their thoughts."

Gorbachev's problem is not of damage control. Unlike Deng Xiaoping, he has not yet dispensed increments of freedom from which the regime has reasons for fear. In this regard, as in many others, the Soviet Union also suffers from historical backwardness. If capitalism has been a spur to liberalization in China, what can perform that function in the U.S.S.R? Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn will be crowned czar of all the Russians before Russia voluntarily liberates its economy the way China has done. Reforms will come, if more will come at all, out of desperation, because nothing else has been able to ignite a spark of curiosity, intitiative, or creativity in the vast wasteland of Soviet life. Oh yes, Soviet mathematics is somehow on the cutting edge, and Soviet gymnastics and ballistics too. But the Soviet Union is not Poland, with its deep and rich civil society operating despite the government, an available resource for a national renaissance. Communism has deadened civil society in the U.S.S.R.

Like any other tyranny, the Soviet leadership must fear free thought and free speech, free elections and free trade unions, a free intellectual life and a free religious life. But it also has a special fear: the centrifugal character of the Soviet Union itself. The Communist empire is a prison house of unassimilated peoples. Any real reform may further re-

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart

1. STEALTH TAKES A HOLIDAY — 1 — 9

Iranamok. White House hopes that its troubles might cool over the holidays went unrealized. The calls for immunity for North and Poindexter were met by Speaker Wright's suggestion of a pardon, while the request that the Senate Intelligence Committee release its findings was hooted at. Bush, meanwhile, has fallen behind Dole for '88, and Iowa doesn't believe Reagan anymore. Reagan had to appoint a point man, and even the hostage families were rediscovered.

2. ALL IN THE FAMILY — — 1

Race relations. America's racial caldron, after years in relative oblivion, is again bubbling over. Behind the murder in Archie Bunker Queens and the Louisiana sheriff's lookout for blacks are pervasive apprehension of blacks among storekeepers and long-simmering black-Oriental problems. Mayors speaking out on the issue risk backlash, a bad sign. The air is filling with familiar pleas for empathy.

3. WINGED VICTORY — 5 — 2

Voyager. The successful flight of the Voyager, complete with an exciting finish, worked predictably as a personal drama, a piece of individualistic Americana, and of course as a Christmas gift to the nation. The practical aspects—lightweight construction and the design—got short shrift.

4. EXILE'S RETURN — — — 1

Sakharov. The transfer of Andrei Sakharov from internal exile to Western TV seems to have caught the West flat-footed. Designed, perhaps, to take advantage of Reagan's current low credibility, the "freeing" of Sakharov has rekindled the quiescent (since Daniloff) debate over Gorbachevian openness. The move does play well with current coverage of Afghanistan, which again is being portrayed as the Soviets' Vietnam.

5. RECYCLED REAGAN — 2 — 7

Reagan. Despite a rally 'round Reagan TV ad campaign running in D.C., the assumption in virtually all topical commentary is that we are already in the post-Reagan era. A sudden revisionism is taking hold that lumps Reagan with Wall Street greed and selfish yuppieism, and that bemoans the undergirding values of movies, advertising, etc. The new old intellectual hero is Arthur Schlesinger and his cyclic view of U.S. history, with Reagan cast as a Grant or a Harding.

6. DECALOGUE DIALOGUE — 6 — 4

Ethics. The focus on national ethics sparked by a variety of scandals is resulting in some wide-ranging self-examination. Never mind Wall Street—the Challenger disaster and Bhopal are said to be the results of unethical engineering practices. Even Ann Landers, it is claimed, has grown fainthearted about recognizing right and wrong. This is beginning to have the makings of a national self-flagellative theme.

7. CULTURAL REVOLUTION — — — 1

China. The U.S. actually seems amused at Chinese students' marches for more freedoms. Well it might; events there seem designed to enhance Americans' convictions about themselves. China has made a well-publicized trip down its proto-capitalist road, from fast food to ferocious consumerism to greater intellectual freedoms. Now students are marching with placards of the Statue of Liberty. The whole episode is like a *Reader's Digest* feature.

8. COLD COMFORT — * — 2

The homeless. Seasonal concern about the homeless grows greater each winter. A major new finding is that they increasingly are families on hard times. Shelters are receiving unprecedented gifts, and TV coverage is going beyond the usual holiday turkey story. Is this sympathetic awareness? Or cosmetic middle-class selfishness?

9. IT'S GR-R-R-EAT! — * — 2

The Constitution. To mark its bicentennial, copies of the Constitution will soon be included in boxes of breakfast cereal, with former Chief Justice Burger reportedly angling to make the document ubiquitous. Critics are already complaining that this approach is superficial and misses the point of the Constitution's significance, but then they haven't yet seen the coming Walt Disney TV special, have they?

10. MONA LEO — — — 1

Mona Lisa. Is that mystic smile Leonardo's? This "art" story played like a supermarket tabloid cover, with the hot angle being da Vinci's encryption of his homosexuality. Similarly bizarre is the continuing notion that the painting is celebrated by a mass audience as great art. In fact, it's just a celebrity, making this story rather like Rock Hudson's. Art stories abound, such as the growing fakery controversies, but look at the attention they've gotten.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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awaken dozens of nationalisms that theory had consigned to the obsolete superstructural rubble of history.

Of all the failures of the Soviet Union, the failure of its nationality policies is the most striking. However cruel the Kremlin's national genocides and deportations, however subtle its ploys at national co-optation, the national and even the mini-national idea has endured. These are primordial loyalties that even ordinary liberals and conservatives have difficulty accepting. The specter that haunts the Kremlin is not a universal idea at all, but the reality of a diversity that would divide if it could.

Much has been made of the stirrings among the Moslem populations of the Soviet Union, their endogamous habits, high birthrate, sense of religious solidarity across borders as long-time threats to the integrity of the U.S.S.R. The threat is real, and there is a delicious irony in the possibility that a state whose capacity for mischief in world affairs has been so immeasurably enhanced by the tides of Islamic fundamentalism may also be swamped by those tides. Yet it is not only the Moslem populations who have refused to yield to the leveling machine of Soviet culture. The Baltic, with immemorial histories and ancient sovereignties, also have successfully resisted efforts by Stalin and others to achieve their political extinction. Maybe in the end the consciousness of the Balts will finally melt away. But does anyone really believe that will happen to the Ukrainians?

We learn from the Kazakh riots that no reform is welcome if it seems to violate the populace's sense of group self. A liberalizing Russian sent from Moscow can never be preferable to a local tribal chief. The Kremlin has sometimes been adept at conciliating the baser nationalist instincts; its anti-Semitic outrages over the years, for example, have been contrived in no small degree to find some common ground with both Ukrainian and Russian nationalism. This is easy. But reform creates rising expectations for genuine political expression of suppressed national feelings. For that reason, Moscow may come to see liberalization as a no-win strategy portending the gradual dissolution of the Soviet state.

Gorbachev may allow academician Sakharov to return from Gorky to Moscow, but he will never authorize an autonomy plan for Latvia or Uzbekistan. If he were to do that, he might have to grant genuine autonomy to Czechoslovakia too. The freedom the Soviet leadership really fears is freedom for the nations imprisoned in that artifice called the Soviet Union or involuntarily allied in the Warsaw Pact.

The Cardinal Goes Calling

John Cardinal O'Connor, the Roman Catholic archbishop of New York, has confided to friends that peace between Israel and the Arabs is a central concern of his ministry. On the evidence, O'Connor as representative of his Church has no standing to contribute to peace in the Middle East. In this matter, in fact, the Vatican has just about the same moral authority as the Kremlin, both having determined that their interests lie wholly in siding with the Arab nations. The Kremlin at least publicly acknowledges the legitimacy of the state of Israel and sees the 19-year suspension of normal diplomatic relations as a temporary exception. But for all of the present Holy Father's mawkish words about the sufferings of the children of Abraham, he and his Church have not quite been able to bring themselves to accept the fact of a reconstituted Jewish commonwealth in the Holy Land.

However much they may deny it, this reluctance evokes the historical hatred of the Church for the Jews. The Roman Catholic Church has cordial relations with the most barbaric of regimes and yet maintains an obstinate interdict against Israel. This interdict is expressed in the pettiest ways. On instructions from Rome, O'Connor may meet the president and prime minister of Israel only in their homes and not in their offices. The cardinal may not visit the Foreign Ministry, even though his trip was at Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's invitation. O'Connor may visit with the mayor of Jerusalem providing the mayor does not try to show him what the municipality has done to safeguard Christian holy places (which is a lot more than what the previous Moslem rulers did).

O'Connor acceded with a certain bravado to Rome's conditions, which inevitably turned his trip from a journey of peace into an instrument of insult to the Jewish nation. He had no choice? Orders from headquarters? No, he had a choice. He could have canceled his trip. Or he could go as a pilgrim, not as a prince of the Church. But that would have meant forfeiting the opportunity to make ex cathedra pronouncements about how nations must live together in peace.

Siege Mentality

Like most other governments, Israel's is known to violate accepted norms of law and justice from time to time. Usually governments take refuge in reasons of state by way of explanation. Israel takes refuge in the state of siege in which it has been forced to live for nearly 40 years. Alas, this is a refuge Israel has been seeking of late with greater frequency and lesser justification. Shortly before New Year's, the Israeli government deported Akram Haniye, editor of *A Shaab*, an Arabic language newspaper published in Jerusalem. He was charged with activity endangering the security of Israel. Maybe he was guilty of such activity, in which case he should have been jailed rather than expelled. But the suspicion naturally arises that he actually was guilty only of publishing views that are offensive to the authorities. No one will ever know for sure because the supreme court refused to permit his own lawyers to examine the evidence mustered against him. This violates the most elemental notion of a fair trial. It will further undermine confidence in the Israeli system of justice, the probity of which has come under suspicion in more than a few bizarre cases during 1986. Friends of Israel should not avert their eyes.

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NOTEBOOK

□ THE SLEAZEBALL WATCH: While the Michael Deaver scandal simmers quietly on the back burner, the trade in influence and connections continues to flourish. Barely a head was turned by the announcement that departing Senators Paul Laxalt and Russell Long will join the same law firm at salaries of "at least $1 million a year"—that's each—according to one partner quoted by the *Wall Street Journal*. Since neither senator has practiced law for many a moon, there's no mystery what Messrs. Finley, Kumble, Wagner, Heine, Underberg, Manly, Myerson & Casey think they're buying (for resale to clients). And no, it's not Long's "expertise" on tax matters. Expertise is not so costly. In an especially witty touch, Finley, Kumble has rented its two conquests a special suite of offices close to the White House, ostensibly so that Laxalt will be conveniently available if President Reagan needs his advice. (Taxis are so expensive.) And, just to complete the circle, the law firm hired Gray and Company, Washington's premier influence-peddling p.r. firm, to help draw attention to its achievement. For further information, call Frank Mankiewicz, (202) 333-7400.

□ THE DRUG-HYPE WATCH: Was it only seven months ago that *Newsweek* launched its crusade against illegal drugs with an open letter from the editor in chief, Richard M. Smith, comparing America's alleged drug crisis to the plagues of medieval Europe? *Newsweek* pledged to cover the story as intensively as it covered the Vietnam War. As far as we know, the "crisis" is as urgent, or otherwise, as it was last summer. Yet lately, the once-familiar "Drug Crisis" logo has become a rarity in *Newsweek*'s pages. And the 21-page year-in-review survey in *Newsweek*'s December 29 issue devotes two paltry paragraphs to the subject. Not that we're complaining.

□ GETTING MILKED: Under a federal program to reduce milk production, 144 farm owners will receive payments of more than a million dollars each for killing some of their cows. The largest payment—almost $10 million—will go to an Idaho "dairy investment group" composed of non-farmers who invest in cows as a tax dodge. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the European Economic Community may go bankrupt this month because of burgeoning farm subsidies that amount to about $100 per European consumer. That's tough. American farm subsidies (about $30 billion last year) cost $700 per non-farm American family.

□ BACK TO BASIC: New Republic Books, a division of this journal, has entered into a co-publishing arrangement with Basic Books. Henceforth, books with the TNR imprint (formerly published in conjunction with Henry Holt and Company) will be published and distributed by Basic, one of America's leading publishers of serious books.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BRAIN DEAD

ON DECEMBER 16 the president and his Cabinet gathered to hear Al Kingon, a White House policy adviser, describe the administration's goals for 1987. For 20 minutes he talked about three: peace in a safe world, budget restraint, and increased productivity. To which Education Secretary William Bennett responded, in Reagan's presence, "Boring, boring, boring. This does the president an injustice." Bennett drew no support from other Cabinet members, and the challenge died quickly. Yet the Cabinet saw its way clear to devote 30 minutes to discussing a proposal to raise federal salaries, including those of Cabinet members. This drew mostly favorable comments. Even Reagan said he liked the idea.

Six days later the same group was back for another meeting in the Cabinet Room, this time to hear Otis Bowen, the secretary of health and human services, outline his plan for catastrophic health insurance. But the centerpiece of the session was Reagan's reading of a letter from a terminally ill, 17-year-old girl, which had been sent to him by a friend in California. The letter amounted to a declaration of hope for mankind, and Cabinet members listened to it with rapt attention. Then came Bowen, and their attention drooped. On the subject of health insurance, Reagan said practically nothing.

And so the Reagan recovery marches on, slowly. The notion that gripped the White House in December was that Reagan could gradually defuse the flap over Iran-amok by turning his attention to other matters. On December 26 he named a special counsel to handle inquiries on the scandal, which would allow regular White House officials, like the chief of staff and press secretary, to spurn press questions about the scandal and tell reporters to check with the new counsel, David Abshire. Of course Abshire won't have anything to say, since he will be spending weeks, maybe months, getting up to speed on the facts. All the better for scandal defusing. Presidential aides figure this arrangement will permit them to talk up Reagan's agenda without being badgered about the scandal.

There are two big problems with this effort to change the subject from the scandal to the Reagan agenda. One is that the White House has yet to create a political environment in which that agenda can command attention. The second is the agenda itself. The Abshire appointment won't do anything to alter the environment because it doesn't answer any of the public's lingering questions about the scandal: Did the president know about the diversion of money to the *contras*? Why was a lieutenant colonel given such a long leash on such sensitive foreign policy issues? And so on. Still, Reagan needs to find a way, as an administration official puts it, "to stabilize the Iran-gate noise at a lower level." Once that is achieved—no

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small feat—he can deal with the agenda problem, which is the need for a new one. And Reagan also must find some way to stir public and press interest in the new agenda, as if he had just been inaugurated. In short, Reagan needs to give the impression that he is starting his third term.

White House officials have long since given up hope that John Poindexter and Oliver North, the deposed National Security Council officials, will testify soon on Capitol Hill that Reagan is telling the truth about not knowing of the diversion of proceeds of the arms sales. Retiring Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada, who has told Reagan he'd take any job at all in the administration if it would help the president recover from the scandal, has suggested that Poindexter and North be asked to issue a terse, written statement saying that Reagan didn't know. Some White House officials are dubious of this, arguing that Poindexter and North must be interrogated on TV or they won't be believed.

Another tactic has been routed circuitously to Reagan by an administration official who got outside advisers to mention it to the president. It also involves Poindexter and North. They would be asked, through their attorneys, to give Reagan the answer to the question: On what authority were you acting in skimming money from the arms deal, getting ransom money from H. Ross Perot, etc.? The response expected is that the two acted on broad authority from the president. OK, Reagan could then say, in a nationally televised address from the Oval Office, something like this: the investigations into this scandal will go on for months, as will doubts about my truthfulness. But at least I now know how all the high jinks happened. My instructions were too vague, and I had too loose a rein on my staff. But I won't let it happen again. Here's a list of ten new procedures that I'm applying to White House operations to prevent a repeat. God bless you, and good night.

THIS, ACCORDING to the official who recommended the tactic, would "deal with what people are concerned about, which is how the thing happened and whether it will happen again." It wouldn't, however, give the White House the look of being on the brink of a fresh presidential term. For that, the president would have to change his White House staff and probably Cabinet members. One official with close ties to the White House says the shuffle doesn't necessarily have to include the ouster of Donald Regan, the president's chief of staff. Sensing the president's resistance, Reagan's outside advisers have abandoned their pleas that Regan be sacked. "They came to grips with reality," says Laxalt. But something more than filling the current vacancies at the White House (press secretary, domestic policy chief) is called for. The best plan, argues an administration official, is to wow Washington with a complete overhaul of the Cabinet, dropping the old fogies who give the administration the appearance of the Politburo and bringing in younger blood. "If the shuffle is big enough, it will command press attention for days and days," the official says. "You can get ten days out of it. A big shuffle is a symbolic gesture that says to people, there's a new government."

A new government requires a new agenda, which isn't an easy thing to come up with. The White House staff hasn't the foggiest idea where to look. Fortunately for Reagan, there is a fresh agenda percolating up in his administration. It's the emphasis on cultural values that was adumbrated by Bennett and amplified, in a different context, by Richard Darman, the deputy treasury secretary. Oddly enough, Bennett and Darman have become a mutual admiration society inside the administration, the neocon and the pragmatist. Bennett heard weeks ago that Darman had kind things to say about his speeches on restoring traditional values like discipline, character, responsibility, rigorous standards, and the pursuit of excellence. Bennett had liked Darman's "corpocracy" speech attacking the decadence of corporate executives. He invited Darman to lunch at the Education Department on December 16. They hit it off, and the Bennett-Darman axis was born.

ORDINARILY, an alliance between the secretary of a second-rank department and the deputy secretary of another department wouldn't amount to much. But Bennett and Darman are unique in the Reagan administration now. They are the only people with any ideas. "I'm surprised that Don Regan hasn't already called Bennett in," says an administration official. "Bennett could give him 50 ideas. He could take five and run with them." Bennett and Darman agree that it's logical for the administration, after cutting taxes and staging a military buildup, now to stress cultural values. The values agenda, according to Bennett, is the final step in "completing the Reagan revolution." An official adds, "Reagan needs to integrate a whole lot of things that haven't been integrated and tie them to the decline of values and the need to strengthen them. But he's got to do this in a way that he doesn't sound like an old man who wants the whole world to be like Dixon, Illinois, again."

But Bennett and Darman haven't been able to penetrate the hermetic seal at the White House. Reagan is distracted by the scandal and probably isn't mentally ready to sail off with a new agenda anyway. He's obsessed with vindicating himself. Just before Christmas, he called Jude Wanniski, the supply-side economics consultant who'd written him six weeks earlier, to defend having sent arms to Iran. Wanniski had said Reagan should try to stop the Iran-Iraq war, and the president said that's what the arms deal was aimed at. Reagan complained about meeting after meeting at the White House on the scandal. And his critics, the president said, "want me to do one thing, then do another." Wanniski advised Reagan to relax, learn to live with the scandal, and get on with other business. Good advice, but easier said than done.

FRED BARNES

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He's a liar, but we like him.

THE CYNIC ROUTE

THE *New York Times*/CBS News poll got tough last month. It asked people straight out whether they thought President Reagan was lying when he said he did not know that money from the Iranian arms sales was going to help the *contras*. Sure he's lying, they said, 47 percent to 37 percent. More than half still thought Reagan had more honesty and integrity than most people in public life. And almost half continued to approve of the way he was handling his job. Maybe the half who think Reagan is lying and the half who continue to have confidence in him are different halves. Nope. A third of those who say he's lying still say he has more integrity than most public officials. People simply think Reagan made a mistake. A serious mistake. And they are waiting for him to acknowledge it and assume responsibility for it. If he does, he can probably pull through the crisis. If he does not, nothing else he does will make any difference. His presidency will be destroyed.

Here are some things the American public believes, according to four major polls: In the arms deal with Iran, the administration was trading military arms for hostages. President Reagan knew that money from the arms sales was going to help the *contras*. So did Vice President George Bush. So did White House chief of staff Donald Regan. So did CIA Director William Casey. The White House is guilty of a cover-up. And the current scandal is as serious for the country as Watergate was.

Here are some other things the American public believes, according to the same polls: Reagan is a strong leader. He has good judgment under pressure. He can be trusted most of the time to make the right decisions. He can be trusted on domestic policy. He can be trusted on foreign policy. He understands the complicated problems a president has to deal with. On balance, there is more to approve than disapprove in his job performance. And he should not fire Donald Regan.

In sum, a widespread negative assessment of Reagan's behavior, but so far only limited damage. Why do so many people still support the president even though they believe he is lying? Cynicism could be one explanation. Americans believe all politicians lie and behave badly. The problem with this explanation is that the public, though critical of Reagan, is not noticeably cynical about him. In fact, during the last three years, public cynicism about government—which had been increasing for 20 years—began to diminish.

Maybe the explanation for Reagan's resilience is naïveté. Americans like the guy so much they are willing to forgive all. But the public doesn't forgive all; it is waiting for an explanation. The *Los Angeles Times* asked, "Would you like to see Ronald Reagan put this whole business behind him as soon as possible, or do you think there is a great deal more about it that ought to be investigated and made public?" Get to the bottom of it, said the public by a 3-2 margin. By 2-to-1, *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News respondents rejected the idea that the whole situation has been exaggerated.

Nor do people accept the administration's line that the press is somehow to blame. Majorities in the various polls have endorsed the following sentiments: The press has acted responsibly in the current crisis. Press coverage of the story has not been too aggressive. And Reagan's treatment by the news media has been fair. So much for the view that people's affection for the president translates into naive and uncritical support.

People's criticism remains fairly specific. They believe Reagan has handled this crisis badly. And doubts have been raised about his competence in managing foreign policy. But so far, that's about it. His approval rating on the economy did not change between October and December—48 percent positive in both months. Reagan was elected to rescue the nation from an economic catastrophe, and, in the public's view, he did just that.

ABC News respondents were asked to choose between two bottom-line assessments of the Iran controversy. The preferred answer was, "It shows that Reagan may have made mistakes in this particular instance, but doesn't raise major questions about his ability to run the country overall." They rejected the alternative view, "It shows that Reagan is not in control of his presidency and raises major questions about his ability to run the country overall," by 2-to-1 in November and again by 2-to-1 in December. Americans' judgment of Reagan's Iran policy is very simple: it didn't work. No legitimate national purpose was served. Why doesn't the president just admit that and get on with the business of governing?

IN THE CASE of Iran, Reagan assumes responsibility for the policy but claims that it was not a mistake (only that "mistakes were made"). From the outset, the American public was convinced that we were trading arms for hostages, and the evidence from the investigation increasingly suggests that the public was right. The president, however, went to great lengths to deny that he was making a deal for the hostages. As for the other three objectives Reagan listed in his November 13 speech—renewing a relationship with Iran, ending the Iran-Iraq war, and eliminating state-sponsored terrorism—there is no evidence that our policies have had any effect whatsoever.

In the case of Nicaragua, Reagan acknowledges that diverting funds was a mistake ("This action raises serious questions of propriety," Attorney General Meese said on November 25), but claims no responsibility for it ("I was not fully informed"). No one believes that either. By margins upward of 4-to-1, the public rejects the notion that Vice Admiral John Poindexter and Lt. Col. Oliver North planned and carried out the whole operation on their own authority.

As it happens, most people didn't believe the president back in September when he claimed that the release of accused Soviet spy Gennady Zakharov was not part of a deal to secure the release of American journalist Nicholas

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Daniloff. Even back in 1983, most Americans were not convinced that our intervention in Grenada was motivated by a desire to free a group of endangered American medical students. It didn't matter in those cases because the payoff was obvious. If our Iranian policy had succeeded, the public would probably feel the same way now. Everybody knows it didn't succeed except, apparently, the president. And that's why the public is quarreling with him.

Don't ask the public to draw lessons from those experiences. Americans approved of the deal to get Daniloff back, but they still don't like the idea of making trades for hostages. Americans drew no lessons from Grenada either. (Even at the time, the public expressed no inclination to try the same thing in Nicaragua.) Those policies were popular, not because they were right or proved some larger point, but simply because they worked. In fact, the payoff in Grenada was so obvious that the public was willing to put up with press censorship, which it does not normally like.

There is a seesaw relationship between confidence in the president and confidence in the press. The press—not Congress or the opposition party—has become the principal institutional critic of the president. When the president is riding high, the press tends to lose favor. "Why is the press being so negative?" people wanted to know after the Grenada episode. "It worked, didn't it?" But when the president loses favor, as was the case during Watergate and the current crisis, the press gains in public esteem. "Why is the president being so stubborn?" people want to know now. "Can't he see his policy didn't work?"

In Washington, the *contra* connection is regarded as the president's most serious problem, since it entails possible criminal activity and obstruction of justice. The public, however, was most shocked by the president's willingness to deal with Iran. Iran is an outlaw regime; its public image is even more negative than the Soviet Union's. And the Ayatollah Khomeini is the object of far more antipathy than either the *contras* or President Daniel Ortega.

In the end, it is not the mistake, but the cover-up that could destroy the Reagan presidency, just as it did Nixon's. Nixon never admitted his mistake. Eisenhower quickly admitted his after the U-2 incident in 1960, as did Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Both presidents were quickly forgiven. Reagan has at least as great a reserve of trust and affection with the American public as Eisenhower and Kennedy did. But for some reason, he's not using it.

Advertising commentator Barbara Lippert recently made the point in the *Washington Post* that, to some advertising executives, the future "looks like Joe Isuzu, in those ads with that large 'He's lying' crawling across our TV screens." Exactly so. Reagan is Joe Isuzu. He's lying. We know he's lying. But we like the guy, and he sells good trucks. The problem is, does *he* know we know he's lying? Joe Isuzu does. Ronald Reagan, apparently, does not.

WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

William Schneider's last article for TNR was "Win Now, Pay Later" (August 4, 1986).

No, not Nixon—Jimmy Carter.

HE'S BACK!

ON DECEMBER 5, 1986, the *New York Times* led its front page with the headline: "Ex-Aide To Reagan Is Said To Link Him To Arms Decision." Just below this revelation, ex-first daughter Amy Carter, "sitting on a container of black beans" in the kitchen of her vegetarian group house, told the details of her arrest during an anti-CIA demonstration at the University of Massachusetts. The same day a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll revealed that "more people approve of the way Jimmy Carter handled Iran than approve of Mr. Reagan's performance." How could that be? Carter's 444-day Iran crisis was a foreign policy fiasco that helped to lose him the presidency. On the other hand, he did bring the American hostages home alive without selling arms to the Ayatollah or breaking any laws. Any president can have a scandal, and any president can break the law. It takes a very special president to make Jimmy Carter's foreign policy look good.

That is exactly what Reagan's handling of Iranamok has done. The president and his remaining loyalists must feel lost and betrayed, robbed of their trusty weapon against critics: the Carter talisman. The president's men thought they would always have Jimmy Carter to kick around, but it doesn't work anymore. Iranamok gave Carter the chance to play the elder statesman on the "Today Show," MacNeil/Lehrer, and "Nightline." A few venturesome op-ed writers even offered complimentary reconsiderations of his tenure. Jimmy's back.

Reagan himself has consistently cast himself as yin to Carter's yang, so it is only mildly surprising that Carter's fortunes should improve as Reagan's decline. But that doesn't really explain Amy Carter's face on page one of the *Times*, or the standing ovations the former president receives when he speaks across the country, or the hero's welcome he gets on visits to Latin America. And what about Carter's coattails? Even with Reagan barnstorming the country and lashing out at Carter's "failed policies of the past" in the 1986 election campaign, three former Carter Cabinet officials won statewide races last November: Brock Adams of Washington (senator), Cecil Andrus of Idaho (governor), and Neil Goldschmidt of Oregon (governor). And it certainly does not account for a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll taken in August 1985—a year before Iranamok—that showed Carter with a healthy 55 percent public approval rating, only eight points lower than that of Reagan himself.

What is going on here? Is America reassessing President Jimmy Carter, the man who gave us the killer rabbit, "national malaise," and the Misery Index? Have Americans forgotten stagflation, Bert Lance's bank account, Billy Carter's Libyan connections, and those limp cardigan sweaters? Is the Carter revival the result of assiduous self-promotion by an ex-president with time on his hands? Or

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is it merely a creation of a media desperate for a new angle on Iranamok?

The press has certainly helped. Carter's presidency was being favorably reconsidered by the media long before the recent scandal. The media have a soft spot for ex-presidents. *Newsweek* managed to revive Nixon in 1986, even though his popularity polls were as low as they were in 1974.

Reagan himself has provided us with another clue. At the October ribbon-cutting ceremony for the $25 million Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta, even the Great Communicator had warm words for his predecessor: "You gave of yourself to your country, gracing the White House with your passion and intellect and commitment. . . ." Reagan's words were carefully chosen to put Carter in the best possible light, but also subtly to remind his audience of the qualities that Reagan and other Carter critics most often attack: the obsessive attention to detail, the workaholic's need to be in command of everything, the stubbornly logical approach that made him seem cold and difficult, the fierce devotion to principle that bordered on sanctimony. In the wake of Iranamok, Carter can no longer be easily attacked for such qualities. The stylistic differences that used to make Carter look like a handwringing wimp are now the ones that make him look like the scrupulous executive Reagan is not.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But this wave of Carter nostalgia isn't just a matter of press hype, or of personal style. The truth is that in many ways Carter was a better Reagan than Reagan himself. In the case of Iran, Carter practiced the policy of not dealing with terrorists that Reagan only preaches. In December 1980, when the Iranians demanded $25 million in "financial guarantees," the Carter administration called it a "ransom" and refused to pay, even though that meant the hostages would not be released until after Carter's term ended.

Carter imposed a grain embargo on the Soviet Union after the invasion of Afghanistan, a move that was condemned by Reagan and helped him win the farm vote in 1980. But last month Reagan's own Department of Agriculture released a study showing that the embargo had little adverse effect on U.S. farm export markets or on farmer incomes. In fact, 1980 was one of the best years ever for grain exports. Reagan also vindicated a key portion of Carter's arms control policy. Though he attacked Carter for weakness in signing SALT II, his administration honored it until November 1986, one year later than Carter set it to expire.

Reagan promised in 1980 to "get government off our backs." But it was Carter who oversaw deregulation in the airline, banking, railroad, trucking, and oil industries, controversial moves that consumers like a lot better today than they did in the '70s. And, of course, the United States spends more money under Reagan (and a smaller percentage of it on defense) than Carter's planners projected—suffering a deficit they would have found unimaginable. Carter cut the deficit from $79 billion in 1976 to $27 billion in 1979, practically a balanced budget by Reagan-era standards. Conventional wisdom holds that the "Reagan Revolution" wrought a reversal in economic policy, but this is simply not true. Conservative columnist M. Stanton Evans, no Carter apologist, wrote in the *National Review* in early 1985, "Were a visitor from Mars to judge exclusively from [budget] data, he would doubtless conclude that Carter, instead of Reagan, won the 1980 election."

These days Carter looks pretty good even on the leadership issue. In a December *Wall Street Journal* op-ed entitled "A Kind Word for Jimmy Carter," Vermont Royster couldn't part with the idea that Carter "never really understood the necessity of dealing with Congress." That is largely true, but it discounts some of Carter's major legislative achievements. A major test of leadership is the ability to make opponents see the necessity of unpopular policies. Carter passed it on several critical occasions. In an effort that promised no political gain, Carter pushed the Panama Canal

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treaties through Congress by personally lobbying Congress in exactly the way that President Reagan was praised for doing in support of his 1981 tax cuts. Though conservatives—including Reagan, who portrayed Carter as "Santa Claus" bearing gifts of strategic territory for Communists—pilloried Carter on the issue, the relative stability of Panama in the ensuing years has shown that the canal treaties were a wise and relatively cheap foreign policy investment.

Carter also fought successfully to remove controls on oil prices, though this move was extremely unpopular with a public suffering double-digit inflation and round-the-block gas lines. The proposal also drew the ire of liberals in Congress, who claimed that decontrol would benefit hated oil companies. With Congress deadlocked on the issue in 1979, Carter lambasted the legislators in a speech that exemplified both the integrity and the abrasiveness of his approach: "I'd rather accept the political blame than spend another two years arguing with you about what ought to be done—when you *know* what ought to be done." Subsequent events proved Carter right and his detractors in Congress wrong. Though initially oil companies and OPEC enjoyed booming profits, the increase in production spurred by decontrol eventually broke the power of the cartel and led to the current low prices.

Clearly Carter revisionists will have plenty of material. Americans may love Reagan beyond reason, but with time, they seem to be coming to respect Jimmy Carter just a little.

JEFFREY L. PASLEY AND
ADAM PAUL WEISMAN

Dumps on the dole.

THE $37,000 SLUM

IMAGINE THAT you are a venom-penned satirist at a conservative journal. To illustrate the follies of the welfare state, you fabricate a program to house homeless families. In your fictional metropolis the wasteful government spends $37,000 a year to house a family of six. Once food, social services, and administration costs are factored in, the family's effective income is well over twice the national median. But due to the inherent inefficiency of the state, they are crowded into vermin-ridden rooms with no cooking facilities, where they dine on hot dogs warmed under the tap. Prostitutes ply their trade in adjacent rooms and drug lords are eager baby sitters. Kept in such conditions for an average of a year and a half, the families swiftly deteriorate: marriages break up, the work ethic erodes, and drug habits are learned. But how barren is the fancy of reaction! What you have described is New York City's system for housing its homeless.

New York's welfare hotels, which are typically ill-maintained and located in the worst sections of town, have been a favorite pond for muckraking journalists and politicians for decades. In 1970 Ed Koch, then a representative, berated John Lindsay for housing families in "fleabags at Waldorf Astoria prices." During Koch's term as mayor, the number of fleabags the city underwrites has more than tripled, and last year it spent $72 million to house some 3,300 families this way. Today Koch believes that families choose to be homeless so as to move to the top of the waiting list for permanent public housing. The latest critic is Ronald Reagan. When asked what the federal government was doing to care for the homeless, he pointed to the thousands that New York was spending to shelter homeless families: "I wonder why somebody doesn't build them a house for $37,000?" he puzzled. In fact, federal guidelines prohibit using the funds directly for housing construction.

THE HOTELS are a synthesis of the worst elements of government intervention and the free market, combining public incompetence with private cupidity. A family of six on AFDC is allotted a $281 monthly shelter allowance, but once they are classified as "homeless" the government will spend ten times that amount to put them up in hotels. Half of the tab is paid by the federal government's Emergency Assistance Payments, a $156.4 million program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. The program, which was intended to cover household disasters such as flood damage and broken furnaces, places no cap on monthly payments and imposes no standards on the housing that is purchased. The theory is that the homeless family only needs temporary assistance. But due to a scarcity of low-cost housing, the stay often stretches on for years, and the longer families live in the hotels, the less likely they will ever become independent again.

There is one group, however, that has managed to make the most of this sorry state of affairs. For the owners of New York's sleazier hotels, homelessness has become a bonanza. A handful of welfare entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the city's largesse by snapping up decrepit buildings and renting out rooms. According to an article in the *Village Voice* last spring, two syndicates of three or four real estate speculators own a quarter of all the welfare hotels patronized by the city. The hotel owners formed the Greater New York Innkeepers' Association to negotiate with the city, and they also contribute thousands of dollars to local politicians to protect their investment. Last year New York paid $1.2 million to the owners of the Jamaica Arms, a hotel the city sold in 1982 for $75,000. The generous payments have also prompted conversions of Single Room Occupancy hotels, which rent rooms to the elderly and single poor and whose regulated rates are set at a tenth of what the city pays to house families. Two years ago, several SROs evicted their tenants so as to collect payments for housing families.

The hotels' windfall profits drew public notice last spring when a mayoral task force revealed that the Holland, a hotel with 1,000 housing code violations on its

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record, made a 50 percent return on its investment. The Holland has since lowered its rates by 30 percent and commenced renovations, but rates at other hotels continue to rise. Why is the city paying so much? Greg Kaladjian, who oversees the city's programs for the homeless, summarized the system for setting hotel rates: "We tell the hotel we need a room, and they tell us how much it will cost." Because the city is under court order to provide shelter for the homeless and lacks alternative housing, hotels can simply dictate their price. In contrast, by negotiating long-term contracts, Fordham and New York University pay a monthly average of $355 per room to house students in tourist hotels—less than a quarter of the city's $1,800 per room average. But when the Human Resources Administration tried to negotiate a standard rate for the city, a lawyer representing the Innkeepers' Association threatened to stop accepting any more families. HRA quickly backed down.

After a rash of articles on the hotels appeared last winter, Koch's response was to move families into communal shelters similar to those used to house single homeless people. But due to high labor costs and mismanagement, the city's spartan barracks shelter in the Bronx spends $70,000 a year to house a family in cavernous open rooms filled with bunk beds.

The shelters with the best records of returning families to independence are run by non-profit groups such as churches and the Red Cross. Many require families to prepare their own meals and pay token rent in escrow so as to preserve the habits of independence. The Henry Street Settlement provides a range of social services and medical care in addition to housing for 20 percent less than the city pays a hotel for housing alone. The settlement's six-month average stay is a third of that of the hotels. The Koch administration is eager to have the non-profits take in more of the homeless, but the steady increase in families and the limits to private compassion have kept the hotels full.

IT IS TEMPTING to suggest that the city simply issue housing vouchers and rely on the free market to provide shelter. Even in New York, apartments can be found for less than $37,000 a year. But such a program would have bottomless demand, since any impoverished family could immediately boost its income simply by becoming homeless. To some degree, the city depends upon miserable accommodations to keep the numbers of homeless down. Most of the families that end up in hotels fit the profile of New York's permanent underclass: 80 percent were on the dole when they became homeless, 85 percent are headed by single women, and the majority of these women have never held a job. The real problem is that the private sector is incapable of providing apartments at rents a welfare family can pay. The vacancy rate among apartments that they could afford is .04 percent. And only a minuscule number of the families in the city shelters find housing on the private market.

The immediate causes of the rental housing crunch in New York and other large cities are now well-known: gentrification, high construction costs, and two decades of abandonment and arson. But the perverse shifts in government housing policies have contributed to the problem. Rent control, thought to be a means of guaranteeing affordable housing, has had the opposite effect, creating a black market system of housing allocation based on connections and bribes. During the waves of urban depopulation in the 1970s, rent control kept official vacancy rates low even as block after block of rental housing was abandoned by the landlords. Then, just as the city began to fill up again, the Reagan administration started to dismantle federal housing programs. Since 1980 the amount spent annually by HUD on housing has declined from $30 billion to $8 billion. When demand for housing was declining, the government crowded out the private market; now that demand for apartments is booming, construction has been slashed. In 1982 Governor Mario Cuomo set up the $50 million Homeless Housing and Assistance Program to construct low-income housing throughout the state. But only 2,200 of the projected 7,700 units have been built so far, barely compensating for the cuts in federal construction.

THERE ARE, though, several relatively simply ways to help homeless families. First, they must be moved out of the welfare hotels and into apartments, even if only on a temporary basis. Although the city can't use federal shelter payments directly to build new housing, it could take out a loan on the projected income. This is the tack taken by HELP1, Andrew Cuomo's widely publicized and much delayed effort to erect 200 prefabricated modules amortized by emergency shelter monies. Recently Koch announced the city would build 20 HELP1-style temporary shelters over the next few years. Second, more permanent apartments need to be made available. The city owns 100,000 abandoned apartments. So far half of them have been rehabilitated (including 3,600 this year) using federal community development grants. With a little bit of ingenuity, the city could use federal shelter payments to fix up thousands more apartments, which would revert to permanent housing once the loan was paid off. Liz Rosenbaum, who ran such a program in Westchester County, made a proposal to the city a year and a half ago but is still awaiting final approval from the HRA. "The problem is that the city runs by crisis," said Rosenbaum. "I tried discussing some of these options with HRA four years ago and they just weren't interested."

Sixteen years after Ed Koch became enraged at the city's subsidies to fleabags, New York realized that there may be a better way to house the homeless. "We're looking into a number of alternatives," said HRA spokesperson Stella Schindler, "but obviously any significant changes will take some time." The wheels of government, as any conservative satirist knows, spin slowly. For $72 million New York City could have made thousands of uninhabitable buildings habitable last year. Instead it made a dozen welfare barons rich.

CROCKER COULSON

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The mystery of a Mexican med school.

NEO-NAZI U

THE AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY of Guadalajara is Mexico's largest private university, and the home of the hemisphere's biggest and best known "offshore" medical school. About 1,000 American students are enrolled, almost all of them because they could not get into U.S. medical schools. Known as the Autonoma to its 20,000 students, the modern, American-style university is also sometimes called the school of Los Tecos—the owls. The faculty's offices are adorned with owl photographs, flowerpots, and candle holders, all displaying predatory eyes and sharp talons. The soccer team is called Los Tecos. And a student organization officially described as a kind of pep club bears the same name.

Students say that Los Tecos is an open organization that promotes school spirit. But for years stories have circulated that the university is run by members of a secret ultra-right-wing sect, that this society is pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic, and that it may have had a hand in Central American death squads. The name of that secret society, according to these reports, is Los Tecos.

Neo-Nazis at an offshore med school supported by the dollars of aspiring American doctors? It sounds improbable. But according to James Lessenger, who attended the Autonoma in the mid-1970s and is now a doctor in California, that is exactly what he and other students discovered. "On the surface [Los Tecos] was a student body organization like the UCLA Bruins . . . but when you started getting deeper and deeper, it was like Hitler Youth. . . . They had this kind of secret society that would do paramilitary and military training, that would have spies in various student organizations, that would have sessions and training about capitalism versus communism, and political and military indoctrination."

Former Tecos members and Mexican law enforcement officials say that Los Tecos is a 50-year-old secret society organized in underground chapters throughout Mexico, with its headquarters in Guadalajara. While not everyone who works at the Autonoma sympathizes with Los Tecos, the university is a stronghold of the organization. Its on-campus youth group recruits young Latin American students for the parent organization and has a reputation in Mexico for being violent and dangerous.

The Tecos' purpose, according to published writings attributed to them, is to head off a vast Jewish-Masonic conspiracy to take over the world. The Tecos believe that Jews seek domination of the material world through their control of international banking, of the political order by conquest directed from the Kremlin, and of the spiritual realm by infiltrating Jewish priests and popes into the Catholic Church.

The Tecos may be fervent anti-communists, but in 1984 they were kicked out of the World Anti-Communist League, a prominent organization of the extreme right, for being too extreme. John K. Singlaub, a retired major general who directed WACL's effort to raise money for the anti-Sandinista rebels, says the leaders of Los Tecos were "anti-Semitic, too radical, and willing to support racist views." In 1984 Singlaub, then chairman of WACL, expelled the league's Mexico chapter. He says he discovered that it was "an outgrowth of the Tecos . . . operating out of the university," and advocating "a form of totalitarianism."

A university spokesman denies Singlaub's allegations and says, in fact, that no secret society named Los Tecos exists. Thus far Jewish groups and the State Department have had trouble confirming suspicions about Los Tecos. Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, who monitors anti-Semitism in Latin America for the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League says he looked into allegations of anti-Semitism and could find "nothing solid." The State Department says the same.

These cursory investigations have focused almost entirely on how the Autonoma treats its American students, many of whom are Jewish. There is virtually no evidence of anti-Semitism against American students, some of whom have even been excused from taking exams on Yom Kippur. Yet neither the State Department nor Rosenthal has investigated the alleged covert activities of top officials at the Autonoma.

The Tecos, it seems, fulfills the mission of its founder, a Guadalajara lawyer named Carlos Cuesta Gallardo. Cuesta also played a key role in the founding of the Autonoma in 1935 as an alternative to Mexico's leftist, state-controlled educational system. A paranoid anti-Semite, he spent World War II in Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany. An even more important influence on the young lawyer was the legacy of the Cristero rebellion of the 1920s, the unsuccessful revolt of conservative Mexican Catholics against the anti-clerical government. Cuesta's early associates have said publicly that he introduced the Cristero's clandestine organization to the university, replete with secret rites using skulls, daggers, and crucifixes, and that his organization controlled the school. Students accepted for leadership had to pass an examination based on anti-Jewish hate propaganda, which Cuesta collected in his private library. Among his closest disciples were three men who are now highly influential at Autonoma: Luis Garibay, Antonio Leano, and Raymundo Guerrero. Garibay is currently the rector of the university, Leano is the vice rector and the Autonoma's principal financial officer, and Guerrero is a law professor. Cuesta died in Guadalajara last year, shortly after celebrating the university's 50th anniversary with these former colleagues.

FOR ITS FIRST 30 years, the Autonoma occupied a series of ramshackle buildings in downtown Guadalajara and survived on a meager budget. But all that changed in the 1960s with the Alliance for Progress. Dr. Oscar F. Wiegand, an American zoology professor from the University of Texas, sought to remake the school as a model university for Latin America. He successfully lobbied liberal Ameri-

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can foundations and universities to aid and fund the Autonoma as a bastion against communism in the region.

Wiegand's efforts were enthusiastically supported by the U.S. State Department. Thomas C. Mann, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs under John Kennedy, not only arranged a sizable loan from the Agency for International Development. His office also scheduled appointments for Luis Garibay at private foundations in New York.

Wiegand admits he knew about the Tecos, its anti-Semitism, and its role at the Autonoma. He insists, though, that the political climate at the school was less important than the goal of developing a first-class educational institution: "People may come and go, but universities last forever."

One thing that did bother Wiegand was the Tecos' apparent diversion of American funds. He says the administrators of the Autonoma "have plundered the thing economically, and they've continued with their political movements, and they monitor students." (A school spokesman denies the charge.) A former Autonoma law professor named Rigoberto Lopez Valdivia, a devout Catholic, told Church authorities in 1967 that the Autonoma's "honeymoon with the State Department" had rescued the Tecos from financial ruin. Lopez Valdivia warned that the secret society was using "all the available resources" of the university to continue its proselytizing.

THE ACTIVE CHIEF of the Tecos, according to Singlaub and former members, is a 60-year-old white-haired law professor named Raymundo Guerrero. Guerrero, by all reports, is an implacable anti-Semite and strident ideologue of neofascism. His duties include teaching the compulsory medical ethics course, described by American students as boring rather than controversial. While employed at the Autonoma, Guerrero has been able to promote the Tecos' weird political agenda through a variety of front organizations outside the classroom. His main front is the Mexican Anti-Communist Federation, which he founded in 1967 as an anti-communist "combat organization." He enlisted deans and department chairmen from the Autonoma as members. This is the organization that represented Mexico in WACL and that Singlaub found too extremist.

Guerrero's group publishes a glossy propaganda magazine, *Replica*, which it distributes internationally. The magazine's usual fare is anti-communist diatribes mixed with lurid exposés of Jewish and Jesuit conspiracies. *Replica* is issued monthly in Spanish and English from federation headquarters in Guadalajara. One of *Replica*'s biggest ongoing stories is the Jewish plot to take over America. The editorial director explained to me in 1982 that "if they don't stop the Jews in the United States, in 100 years they will be the lords of North America." His proof was the "Jewish conspiracy" of Watergate—initiated by the "young Jews Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward," and their Jewish-owned newspaper, the *Washington Post*. Then he explained how the Jewish-owned *New York Times* and its "Jewish investigative reporter" Seymour Hersh had deflated America's fighting morale in Vietnam, which ultimately was lost through the arrangements made by another Jew, Henry Kissinger, and his "Jewish bosses," the Rockefellers. "I'm not anti-Jewish," he told me, "but if you have the facts, you have to publish them."

Replica's masthead indicates just how close the connection is between the magazine and the school. One former editor teaches journalism and another headed the faculty association while running the magazine. The head of the alumni association (and former dean of student affairs) used to be the general manager of *Replica*. A university spokesman denies that the Autonoma endorses *Replica*'s anti-Semitism, but defends its professors' right to hold such views.

The director of the Autonoma's daily paper, one of *Replica*'s long-time contributing editors, is a man named Raphael Rodriguez, whom WACL identified as the No. 2 man in the Tecos after Guerrero. In 1972, when Guerrero became chairman of the WACL, he appointed Rodriguez to head the Latin American affiliates—a position Rodriguez held until 1984. During the 12 years Guerrero and Rodriguez were active in WACL, the Autonoma became the center for the leadership of a loose-knit political movement of ultra-right-wing groups implicated in death squads from one end of Latin American to the other.

IN SEPTEMBER 1980 Rodriguez organized a conference of all these extreme anti-communist groups as part of WACL's convention of its Latin American affiliates. The meeting was held in Buenos Aires with the blessing of Argentine dictator Jorge Videla and other military officials. (The Argentine courts have since sentenced Videla to life in prison for leading the country's "dirty war," a wave of repression in the late 1970s that killed thousands of civilians.) *Replica* devoted two cover stories to the conference and reprinted both Rodriguez's and Guerrero's speeches.

Rodriguez declared that the goal of the conference was to develop "harsh, concrete plans" to confront "subversion" in Central America based on the expertise of those who had eliminated it from Argentina. In the audience was a man named Freddy Zarratini, a co-organizer of the event and the leader of Argentina's Nazi party. On the dais with Rodriguez was Roberto d'Aubuisson, the Salvadoran political leader linked to right-wing death squads.

D'Aubuisson followed Rodriguez's advice. At the conference he arranged for Zarratini and a group of Argentine military intelligence officers to visit El Salvador. There the Argentine officers advised National Guard intelligence officers involved in death squads, according to two of d'Aubuisson's closest associates. One of them, a man named Roberto Gonzalez, was d'Aubuisson's personal pilot at the time. He says he chauffeured Zarratini and the other Argentines around Central America in a private plane. The other associate was Francisco "Chico" Guirola, a well-to-do Salvadoran businessman who helped finance d'Aubuisson's activities. Guirola said in an interview in 1982 that Raphael Rodriguez and his colleagues in Mexico were the hub of this network of pro-Nazi, violent anti-

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The Right Wing Takes Over T.V.

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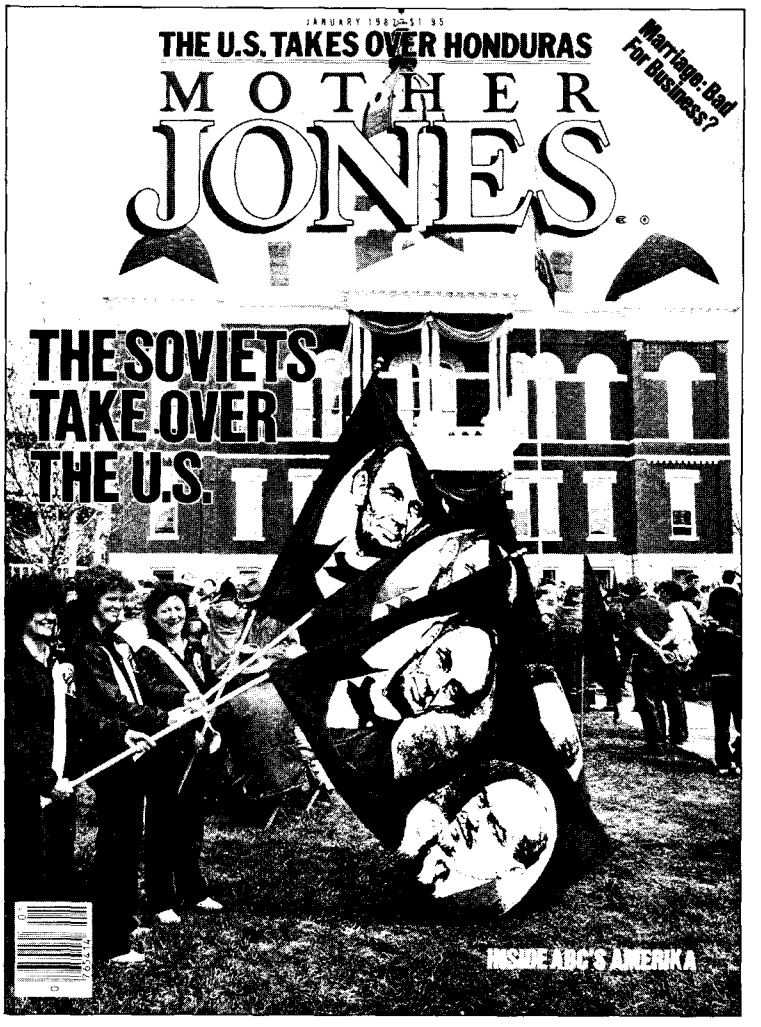

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communists. "They have their own training camps. They have their own brotherhoods," Guirola said. "They're well organized all over the world. Their center is the Autonoma de Guadalajara."

Today the Autonoma maintains educational exchanges and affiliations with 27 universities in the United States, Latin America, and Asia. The University of New Mexico is one of the few schools that has investigated the allegations surrounding the Autonoma, and it has suspended almost all of its exchange programs. But other institutions have disregarded information about the Tecos, and one that looked into the matter was discouraged from taking any action by the Jewish community in Guadalajara, which is reportedly fearful of anti-Semitic reprisals. The Autonoma has probably been hurt more by the proliferation of medical school diploma mills in the Caribbean than by the reputation of the Tecos. But even with the decline in American enrollment, the tuition money of U.S students at medical school probably provides the Autonoma with about $10 million in hard currency every year.

Back at the Autonoma, nothing seems out of place. Just ask the U.S. government. The Autonoma "functions more like an American university than any I've seen in Latin America," explains a U.S. official familiar with the school. He says that "AID considers it one of its most successful educational projects anywhere in the world."

CRAIG PYES

Craig Pyes is an associate with the Center for Investigative Reporting, a non-profit news organization located in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Conservatives conceive a 'crisis.'

THE BIRTH DEARTH

BY TONY KAYE

BRACE YOURSELF for the next conservative crusade: low fertility rates. Although birth rates don't pack the rhetorical punch of the Evil Empire or killer cocaine, conservatives warn that the U.S. population will decline so dramatically that in 165 years the United States will have the same number of people it has today. Twenty years ago, environmentalists warned that a population explosion threatened the planet. Now conservatives have discovered a new specter haunting America's future: the "Birth Dearth."

While it seems two campaigns could not differ more than the Birth Dearth and the Population Explosion, they are in fact mirror images of one another. In 1968, that dread year of the conservative calendar, Dr. Paul Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb*. Ehrlich predicted that the population of the Third World would double in 25 years; the U.S. population, in 68 years. More people meant more pollution. A contaminated planet would yield less food to feed more people. The world faced a stark choice, he wrote: a " 'birth rate solution,' in which we find ways to lower the birth rate" or a " 'death rate solution,' in which ways to raise the death rate—war, famine, pestilence—*find us*."

Ehrlich offered three scenarios for the coming "famine decades." Scenario I ends in a limited nuclear war with 100 million dead Americans. "A bad scene," Ehrlich observes, but it gets worse. In Scenario II famine sweeps across Asia, Africa, and South America. Mexico, the last non-communist state in Latin America, falls to Maoist rebels. The United States faces riots, martial law, and clouds of "killer smog." In 1980 tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union erupt into nuclear war. "Small pockets of *Homo sapiens* hold on for a while in the Southern Hemisphere," but only briefly. Cockroaches inherit the earth. In Scenario III, the United States finally wakes up to the population problem, but not before famine claims 500 million lives.

The future looked bleak, but Ehrlich resisted drastic measures like "the addition of temporary sterilants to water supplies or staple food." Instead, he suggested the government raise taxes for couples who had children and award "responsibility prizes" to those who didn't. But Ehrlich pinned most of his hopes on a public campaign to spread the word about the perils of population growth. His book, *The Population Bomb*, did that quite successfully, selling nearly a million copies its first two years in print.

Among the first to denounce Ehrlich and the "explosionists" was Ben Wattenberg, now a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Explosionism was one entry in the "litany of woe and crisis" he claimed to dismember in his 1974 book, *The Real America*. Declaring Ehrlich's book an "alarmist fiction," Wattenberg wrote that "the baby boom has been replaced by a Birth Dearth." In a "Speculation," he projected U.S. population trends into the 22nd century. Instead of the inexorable growth predicted by the explosionists, Wattenberg found the U.S. population would fall to 185 million by 2160. Wattenberg had great

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hopes for the Birth Dearth. Smaller families would have more disposable income and a higher standard of living; poor families with fewer children would enter the middle class; "In short, unprecedented individual affluence . . . more people with more spending money in the massive majority middle."

IN THE intervening years since *The Real America*, something has gone horribly wrong with the Birth Dearth. In a paper co-authored last year with AEI research associate Karl Zinsmeister, Wattenberg offered "A Speculation on the Geopolitical Implications of Below-Replacement Fertility in the Western Democracies." Using precisely the kind of alarmist hysterics for which he had attacked Ehrlich, Wattenberg has transformed the Birth Dearth from a boon to the middle class into a peril to Western civilization. He placed the Birth Dearth on the Washington policy agenda when the paper was published in *Public Opinion*, an AEI journal, in early 1986 .

If Wattenberg has soured on the effects of the Birth Dearth, it's not because the U.S. demographic picture is worse than he expected. He now projects the population to peak at 291 million in 2035, a considerable improvement over his 1974 projection, in which he expected the United States to peak ten years earlier at 265 million. Nonetheless, Wattenberg and Zinsmeister are disturbed that American fertility rates have stayed below replacement level (which is 2.1 births per woman) for ten years in the absence of war or economic depression, an unprecedented situation. Fertility rates are even lower in Western Europe, where several countries have actually lost population in recent years.

In the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, on the other hand, they're breeding like rabbits. Furthermore, when compared to the less developed countries (defined as "non-democratic and/or non-modern peoples") the West will shrink from one-seventh of the world's population to one-15th by 2060. Wattenberg and Zinsmeister argue that fewer people will mean fewer consumers and taxpayers. A contracted economy and fewer tax dollars will eventually buy less military power and international influence. "In stark shorthand . . . every major nation that is modern and free is also on a demographic track that, if not changed, will ultimately decimate it."

As if borrowing from Ehrlich, the authors offer three scenarios for how the population gap could alter the superpower balance. In Scenario I, the Soviets see a struggling United States, and in the middle of the 22nd century resolve to " 'spend them into the ground.' " In Scenario II, the high fertility rates of Moslem minorities in the Central Asian republics have forced the Kremlin into an uneasy power-sharing arrangement. The Communist Party, though wielding less power within the Soviet Union, still rules a nation more powerful than the United States. In Scenario III, the restless minorities finally achieve "victory in the bedroom," and the Soviet Union is broken up by "centrifugal demographic pressures." This "would probably benefit the U.S.," but, the authors warn, "There has never been extended civil strife in a nation with nuclear weapons."

The population gap grows still more troubling as the authors factor in demographic trends in Western Europe and the LDCs. Might the Soviets someday be tempted to attack the dwindling countries of the West? they ask. "Simple acquiescence of the weak to the strong would be a more likely occurrence, finally vindicating the theory of the Finlandization of Western Europe." Wattenberg and Zinsmeister seem optimistic that democracy will continue to spread in the Third World. But as they envision the West's share of the world population declining, they lose their confidence. "[I]s it possible that the spread of democratic values may be slowed? Or stopped? Or reversed?" The authors never say. To ask such questions, it seems, is to answer them.

Wattenberg and Zinsmeister trace the cause of the Birth Dearth back to contraception, delayed marriage, legal abortion, and "the new economics of women." They note that women entered the work force 20 years ago, "corresponding almost exactly with the Birth Dearth." Although these changes have liberated women individually, they threaten "the continued flourishing of the very societies which made them possible. . . . Is it history's cruel joke that a culture's success brings about its own erosion?"

Clearly the stakes are high—Finlandization, nuclear war, the future of the democratic idea. But Wattenberg and Zinsmeister, like Ehrlich and the explosionists, spurn drastic measures to reverse the Birth Dearth. They advocate only "non-coercive" methods. They want increased immigration and day-care provisions as well as changes in the tax code to "re-weight the options available to the modern woman regarding the trade-off between childbearing and wage earning." Most important, they call for a public campaign to awaken the baby boom generation, particularly yuppies, to the economic and geopolitical perils of the Birth Dearth. Now "more materialistic than maternalistic," yuppies must be made to understand "they are part of a remarkably productive, humane, and beneficent culture, and that only they can preserve it."

AT THE CORE of the Birth Dearth argument rests Wattenberg and Zinsmeister's not-so-skillful use of demographic data. Serious demographers don't stake their reputations on a single demographic future, as Wattenberg and Zinsmeister have done. The Census Bureau always publishes three projections based on a low, middle, and high fertility rate. Wattenberg and Zinsmeister's constant fertility rate of 1.8 is a reasonable middle-series assumption. But these assumptions have never fared very well in the past.

In 1945, for example, the Census Bureau's middle-series projection for the U.S. population for 1980 was 164 million—an underestimate of 62 million. The baby boom caught the Census Bureau completely by surprise. Many demographers now think low fertility is a fact of modern industrial life. They don't expect another baby boom, and many believe fertility rates could go still lower in coming decades. But after that, all bets are off and few demogra-

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phers would be surprised if the rates returned to replacement level or higher.

Furthermore, Wattenberg and Zinsmeister have projected population out two centuries. Demographers rarely do this—but it is central to the Birth Dearth campaign. After all, even if fertility rates remain unchanged, the U.S. population will continue to grow well into the next century as the enormous baby boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) enters its childbearing years. Most of us will be dead by 2035, when Wattenberg and Zinsmeister say the population will begin to decline. Beyond that, they are making projections about the childbearing decisions of women who won't be born for several generations. While Wattenberg and Zinsmeister express no doubts about their projections, they are in the same position as a social observer in the 1820s predicting the maternal preferences of women in 1986. The less adventurous demographers at the Census Bureau only carried their 1984 projection out to the year 2080.

But in the unlikely event that Wattenberg and Zinsmeister's projections prove correct, we still may not have to consign the West to the dustbin of history. Even at the end of their projection, U.S. population will stand at 241 million in 2150. That's only one million fewer people than we have today. Furthermore, the population gap now stands overwhelmingly in our favor. According to Wattenberg and Zinsmeister, the West currently has 339 million more people than the Warsaw Pact countries. Given that the population gap seems to give us little comfort now that it's massively in our favor, we need not be too concerned that our adversaries may have an advantage of a mere 40 million people 165 years from now.

This is not to suggest that demographic changes, if they come to pass, will have no consequences. The West Germans are already having a hard time fulfilling their NATO troop commitments. The United States may also find it difficult to maintain a volunteer army with fewer young people. Economically, however, the effects of population decline cut both ways. We may have to pay higher taxes to keep our military stockpiles at current levels. Fewer workers will eventually have to support more elderly people on Social Security. A smaller, older work force may be less productive than a larger one. Then again, a smaller work force might have less unemployment. The gross national product may go down, but spread over fewer people, real income may go up. We simply don't know. Large industrial nations have never experienced long-term population decline, which is one reason Wattenberg and Zinsmeister are, if not restrained, a little cagey about its effects.

THE VAGARIES of Wattenberg and Zinsmeister's argument have not discouraged social-issue conservatives from adopting the Birth Dearth crusade for their own purposes. Allan C. Carlson is president of the Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank that "seeks to rebuild an American ethical consensus rooted in the moral traditions of Western civilization." In the December 1985 issue of "Persuasion at Work," a Rockford newsletter, Carlson declared that "the survival of the United States as a pluralistic democracy may depend on how we choose to handle the fertility question." Carlson chooses a tax cut, that "tried-and-true American method of social policy," and a return to traditional values. He suggests the exemption for dependents be raised to $4,000-$5,000. This would strengthen the hand of "America's ace-in-the-hole on the fertility question: its pervasive religiosity," reducing the economic burden on religious couples who tend to have large families.

Carlson's article was reprinted in a half-dozen papers including *USA Today* and the *International Herald Tribune*. The neoconservative journal *The Public Interest* lent its intellectual respectability to Carlson by publishing a longer version of the article. When the piece ran in the Sunday Outlook section of *The Washington Post*, it caught the eye of a producer for "The 700 Club," Pat Robertson's daily religious talk show. On September 10 Carlson appeared on "The 700 Club" to discuss population decline. (Zinsmeister appeared in a taped segment introducing the subject.) Robertson was very struck by the issue, describing it as "genetic suicide." A week later, when Robertson announced his plans to run for president, he ad-libbed a few remarks about population decline.

The reverend candidate returned to the subject in a speech to the Economic Club of Detroit the following week. Robertson told the assembled businessmen that new markets are the key to economic growth, and a major threat to American markets is, "for want of a better word, the 'depopulation' of the West." Robertson endorsed Carlson's per-child tax deduction as a way to encourage women who, as he put it, "voluntarily wish to stay home." In the Birth Dearth, Robertson has found an issue that allows him to push his social program on grounds that appear to have nothing to do with his religious and social views. This is no mean feat for a presidential candidate whose public image is dominated by the eerie folkways of Pentecostalism—speaking in tongues, faith healing, prophecies of Armageddon. Instead of pushing "social issues," Robertson is pushing social science.

THE REAGAN administration has also discovered population decline. This fall Carlson gave a presentation to the White House Working Group on the Family, arguing that the cause of low fertility and most threats to the American family is the collapse of the " 'family wage' system." Under the family wage, he explained, women were relegated to jobs with less pay and prestige than men, because men supported families and women worked only temporarily until they married and had children. Carlson thinks the demise of the family wage system and the phenomenon of working women are largely the creation of intrusive government. He said government could undo the damage by repealing the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and "the word 'sex' " in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination against women as well as minorities. But he noted that, attractive though they may be, such changes would face "nearly insurmountable political and 'public relations' obstacles." Instead, Carlson recom-

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mended changes in the tax code, including the $5,000-per-child tax exemption.

Carlson's presentation apparently impressed the Working Group. Its report, "The Family: Preserving America's Future," cites population decline as an undeniable symptom of "the withering of the American family." "We can foresee the graying of America, with new strains on social security, the manpower needs of the economy, and the viability of the volunteer armed forces." The Working Group also recommended his $5,000-per-child exemption.

WE CAN EXPECT to hear about the Birth Dearth and its attendant ills as the 1988 presidential campaign approaches. Jack Kemp may use it in his upcoming campaign for the presidency. Last year Kemp distributed to every member of the House the transcript of an AEI symposium, moderated by Wattenberg, on world population trends. In June Kemp raised the geopolitical implications of population decline in a speech to the National Right to Life Annual Convention. "No nation," he said, "can long remain a world power when its most precious resource is a perishing resource." Never one to let the facts interfere with his sweeping vision, Kemp proclaimed, "Most of the Western world today is shrinking. Only recently have serious scholars like Allan Carlson begun asking the haunting question—'must our children be our enemies?' "

Now that Carlson and Wattenberg have helped put the Birth Dearth phenomenon on the agenda, the media have begun to pick up the story. *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, *National Journal*, and the *Wall Street Journal* have all discovered the peculiar breeding habits of yuppies in the last year, treating Wattenberg and his dire speculations with varying degrees of prominence and skepticism. Just last month *Newsweek* discovered "Europe's Population Bomb." Wattenberg will publish a book on the Birth Dearth in May. As the crusade heats up, America's "population bomb" could be just a bureau report away.

Demographic angst has a long and checkered history. As Michael Teitelbaum and Jay M. Winter have shown in *The Fear of Population Decline*, alarums about France's new fertility rates in the face of a growing German population were a staple of French politics from the 1870s to the 1940s. During World War II the Vichy regime blamed low birth rates for France's defeat at the hands of the Germans. The collaborationist slogan, "Work, Family, Country," expressed Vichy's attempt to replace the decadent individualism of the Third Republic with a culture that celebrated family and nation. At a Mother's Day Festival in 1941, Pétain himself awarded bronze, silver, and gold medals to women who contributed more than five children to the greater glory of France.

Yet while the Birth Dearth campaign derives in part from a long European tradition, it has also emerged from uniquely American demographic and political developments. The oldest members of the baby boom generation turned 40 in 1986. And regardless of whether the population of the United States declines over the next two centuries, there's no question the baby boom generation will constitute 60 percent of the electorate in 1988. As the baby boomers come of age politically, their social views and political goals will dominate the national agenda.

The baby boomers are conservative on economic issues, but socially libertarian, and dovish on foreign policy. They have scant enthusiasm for an anti-communist foreign policy or the use of military force championed by neoconservatives. They are hostile to the traditional values agenda of social conservatives. As the Reagan era draws to a close, neo- and social conservatives face the demographic truth that a generation whose views are inimical to their own will shape the national agenda for the next several decades.

The Birth Dearth campaign's attack on the causes of low fertility is essentially an attack on the libertarian social values of this generation. Once a moral affront to conservatives, the cultural legacy of the 1960s is transformed into an incipient economic and national security disaster. This allows secular neoconservatives and religious social conservatives to unite in the happy work of rooting out every last trace of the 1960s—contraception, "cohabitation," abortion, working women.

But the Birth Dearth campaign is being packaged in ways that may be appealing to baby boomers and liberals. Tax reform and the deficit notwithstanding, Democrats might find Wattenberg and Carlson's proposals for easing the economic burden of raising families very attractive. As long as its underlying premises aren't spelled out, Democrats may seize the Birth Dearth as the irresistible motherhood and apple pie issue of 1988.

For now, "non-coercive" methods of raising the birth rate—changes in the tax code and persuasion—are the order of the day in the Birth Dearth campaign. Its sponsors say they don't want to overturn abortion laws or stop people from living together or getting divorced. Nor do they want to *force* women out of the work force to have children, the argument runs—just encourage those who "voluntarily wish to stay home."

BUT SUPPOSE the Birth Dearth campaign succeeds in making geopolitical apprehensions about low fertility more pervasive. It would only be logical to argue that restrictions on abortion, a special tax on childless couples, perhaps even repealing the word "sex" from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (after all, it's just one word) are a small price to pay to avoid the Finlandization of the West.

As the Birth Dearth campaign progresses, we should keep two things in mind. First, there are many wonderful reasons to have children. Population decline is not one of them. Second, the Birth Dearth crusade has more to do with the political uses of population decline than its alleged geopolitical implications. Sixteen years ago in these pages, Ben Wattenberg offered a description of the campaign behind the population explosion 20 years ago that is no less true of the Birth Dearth campaign today: "What it all adds up to is this: why have a long-range manageable population problem that can be coped with gradually over generations when, with a little extra souped-up scare rhetoric, we can drum up a full-fledged crisis?" □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

An American Tragedy

Platoon is the best fiction film about Vietnam combat since *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978). That statement is misleading because it implies that there are many good films to choose from. Allowing for some parts of *The Deer Hunter*, the only Vietnam combat films I admire are the two above and a documentary by Eugene S. Jones, *A Face of War* (1968).

Platoon
(Orion)

In *Platoon* a green recruit, Chris, who enlisted out of college, arrives in Vietnam in 1967; is initiated into jungle warfare, then hardened by it; is wounded in 1968; and is evacuated. That is the shape of the film. Within that shape the only strong narrative element is the developing enmity between two hard-bitten sergeants in Chris's unit, one who has been driven over the moral edge by combat, one who still retains a grip on his precombat self. The rest of the film is base, patrol, combat, base, patrol, combat, base, patrol, combat. The action is not used as a ground for a story, conventional or otherwise. It is the experience of the war that this film wants primarily to give us, not drama.

An austere design: but one proof of the film's achievement is that its few weaknesses come when it is less austere. When Chris first goes on patrol, we hear his heartbeats. The morning after a blood-soaked battle, we hear birds twittering and see a pensive deer in the woods. Throughout, Chris has a number of voice-over comments, in the form of letters to his grandmother. These, especially the passage when he's on the helicopter flying out, are the stuff of TV equivocation. They shunt the film momentarily into the shape of an object lesson, when the real point of the film is that there is no lesson—other than Hegel's dictum, not less bitter for being familiar: "Peoples and governments never have learned anything from history . . . ."

Platoon was written and directed by Oliver Stone, a graduate of the NYU Film School who has written and directed four previous films and has written some others. Except for his last film, *Salvador*, which I didn't see but which was apparently serious, nothing in Stone's past promised anything as good as *Platoon*. He won an Oscar for his screenplay of the sensationalist *Midnight Express* and has worked on the scripts of films even worse. As far as is visible, Stone has done what many have tried, or said they tried, in the American film world: he took any means of entry in the hope that, once inside, the chance for good work would come. Stone has certainly made his way upward. *Platoon* is a fine film. It is also, says Stone, an autobiographical one: he had 15 months of combat in Vietnam and was wounded twice.

Chris is played by Charlie Sheen (son of Martin Sheen, who played the lead in Coppola's Vietnam film, *Apocalypse Now*). Sheen looks the part so convincingly that questions of talent almost seem irrelevant as the dew of the newcomer is wiped off and he settles into the life-and-possible-death of a "grunt." Keith David is King, the black man who befriends Chris from the start—a portrayal of a "natural man" done with succulence. King is also something like the center of the band of blacks in the unit who maintain racial cohesion even as they live and fight alongside white soldiers. The two sergeants are the most deeply developed characters. Tom Berenger, no Burt Reynolds look-alike here, is excellent as the scarred, toughened killer-and-survivor, Barnes. Willem Dafoe, whose taut, bony face has served him as a heavy in previous films, is also excellent as the equally toughened Elias.

Elias, a canny jungle fighter and expert killer, is struggling to hold on to his prewar self, his potential future self. Barnes, like a few of the men under him, has wiped out everything except where he is and what he is there to do. So it is Barnes who, after the ambush and torture and death of one of his men, goes blood-mad in a village and murders an old woman, then orders the village to be torched. It is Elias who tries to prevent more murders, who tries to stop the torching, and who does stop two "grunts" from raping little girls.

A deep horror of the film is that, though our sympathies are with Elias, we understand Barnes and even the would-be rapists. Trapped in the cage of front-line life, living (if they're lucky) from moment to moment, values that apply elsewhere fade out for Barnes and others. Impotent fury, desperate need obliterate the men they once were. In the grinding of the days and nights, Elias loses out to Barnes, and Chris himself succumbs to the Barnes view. (The late John Osborne, a civilized man, reported for TNR from Vietnam in 1969 that homicidal rage swamped him on occasion, and he was only an observer.)

It's just after Chris's murder of Barnes (presumably not autobiographical) that, as he flies out on a helicop-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Half Life. An Australian, Dennis O'Rourke, presents a straightforward documentary about the Marshall Islanders who suffered the consequences of the U.S. H-bomb explosion in 1954. (Reviewed 12/15/86)

Marlene. Maximilian Schell triumphs over the fact that the present-day Dietrich would not appear on screen by making an imaginative documentary about her. Her voice throughout. (12/8/86)

Sid and Nancy. Surprise. This film about the lives and deaths of punk rocker Sid Vicious and girlfriend is seriously good. (10/27/86)

Thérèse. One of the very few religious films that are worthy of their subjects. Alain Cavalier's quiet, lovely biography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is like an illuminated manuscript. (12/29/86)

SK

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ter, he has nice thoughts about how to use his future life well. I'm not giving anything away. One value of this film is that there is nothing to reveal: essentially we know everything that is going to happen and, *because of that*, are riveted.

The good cinematography of Robert Richardson is occasionally flecked with focus-racking—a change of focus in the middle of a shot to sharpen the foreground and blur the background or vice versa. Those changes momentarily nudge us out of absorption. But the music is always good. Principally it is Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, arranged by Georges Delerue, that moves under the action in a different rhythm, enouncing an elegy for men about to die or to be maimed or to be invisibly maimed.

One embracing horror in *Platoon* we supply ourselves: the context. It is we who know that everything these men are doing and suffering is futile, that the only way we could have won was by killing every North Vietnamese. As Hendrik Hertzberg said in this journal ("Why the War Was Immoral," April 29, 1985), "The logic of winning in Vietnam was inescapably the logic of genocide. We did not lose in Vietnam. We chose not to win. . . . It wasn't cowardice that finally impelled us to quit. It was conscience." And that long-delayed act of conscience helped to bring about the Cambodia butchery. "Irony" is too pallid a term.

Stone has written and directed a war film so stinkingly genuine that we never even bother to think that it's better than most war films. The only point of reference I thought of while watching *Platoon* was Michael Herr's monumental book *Dispatches*, about his experiences as a correspondent in Vietnam. Herr says, about accompanying one of his first patrols, "Once I saw a light moving in the jungle and I caught myself just under a whisper saying 'I'm not ready for this, I'm not ready for this.' " *Platoon* shows us in cold sweat one of the worst things about war: it finally does make men ready.

MARK STEVENS ON ART

Running On Empty

Today ordinary artists use gigantic canvases, heap up meanings in an impressive pastiche, cultivate both the outrageously academic and the academically outrageous, and borrow from the past with a braggart's smile. They are also dazzled by the shine of money and stardust. Critics often blame this situation on dealers, collectors, and museums, who benefit from what Arthur Danto calls Hot Art. The critics are right. But there is another, more sympathetic reason why art today looks the way it does. Simply put, many artists feel an intense nostalgia for an art as robust and magical, as successfully passionate, as abstract expressionism. They suffer from what amounts to power envy, an illness of the imagination common when great art is scarce. The principal symptom, enhanced by the celebrity machine, is an exaggerated respect for size.

Last fall, the Pace Gallery in New York exhibited the work of two artists—Agnes Martin and Julian Schnabel—who have such contrasting views of what constitutes power in art that I can't resist treating them together. Now in her 70s, Agnes Martin lives in a small house she built herself in a town near Santa Fe. This has led romantics to suppose her a reclusive mystic; but she is not religious, and her paintings have nothing in common with the cloudy business that often passes for mystical art. The recent paintings are, as usual, non-objective (she distrusts the term abstract). On each six-foot-square canvas she has painted a series of horizontal stripes, ranging from three in *Untitled Four* to 24 in *Untitled Nine*. In some pictures all stripes are the same size; in others there are two sizes. The stripes always alternate between two shades of gray indigenous to the particular painting. She has used a palette knife, and has not (unlike in her earlier work) drawn any lines. This description of the facts will doubtless be enough to give some people fits. I sympathize. So many geometric paintings really do resemble the emperor's new clothes, or perhaps mattress ticking. The

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wonder is that Martin's don't. They are suffused with modesty and reverie, with what she calls "memories of perfection."

MARTIN LIVED in New York in the 1950s and, like many of her contemporaries, looked long and hard at abstract expressionism. In particular, she admired the methods with which certain artists were handling space. By emptying a painting of many traditional ways of defining space, while increasing the size of the canvas, an artist like Rothko brought a beautiful boundlessness into art; and Rothko often spoke of heroism and tragedy and the sublime. The artists of Martin's generation who did not want to copy Rothko or Pollock—who wanted their own kind of strength—tended to pooh-pooh the big talk. Color-field painters retained the abstract expressionist space, for example, but stressed its formal interest and modernist origins. (The critic Clement Greenberg did not use loaded words like "boundless"; he analyzed "allover" composition.) Minimalists became obsessed with rules, while those still interested in portraying recognizable objects adopted the deadpan of Pop. Martin also lowered the heat, putting a grid into the big spaces and taking some drama out of color. She seemed to distrust the personal note, that turbulent link of power and self, that often characterized the abstract expressionists. Her favorite word, she has said, is humility.

More than most painters of her generation, however, she retained the hope of high feeling that haunted Rothko. Not surprisingly, she tried to channel the feeling away from the self and its cocky manifestations. She aspired instead to classical images of perfection. Perfection is not seen in nature, of course. It is glimpsed, as any Platonist knows, with the inner eye. Like many modern artists, Martin found in the purity of geometry a means of evoking this ideal realm. To the moody spaces of Rothko, Martin's geometry brought what Braque once called—he might have been speaking of classical art in general—"the rule that corrects the emotion."

Martin's strictly symmetrical grid has the advantage of appearing complete in itself, which suits the idea of perfection. And it feels contemporary: it partakes of science and the flat-footed fact. Of course, in the rule that corrects the emotion one can sometimes discern tyranny as well as transcendence. An idealized image has attracted many power-hungry artists intolerant of human irregularities, and has often lent itself to an art of airless perfection, as in the work of Josef Albers. The tyrant in an art of symmetry can even be playful; rule-bound decoration is an example. Mondrian and Rothko, perhaps sensing such dangers, refused both the grim and the pretty consolations of symmetry.

What excites our interest in the symmetries of Martin's painting is their unexpected gentleness, a gentleness in which there is nothing infirm. She will insist upon symmetry, but with such delicacy and tact. It's as if her art says, "Excuse me, I just want to remind you that there's also . . . *this*." There is nothing daunting in the scale of her paintings. They seem human-size, about an arm's-length wide at viewing distance. She likes to hang them low so that they are not much taller than a person of average height. Her way of applying paint is no less tactful. To call exaggerated attention to a brush stroke, for example, would seem self-admiring and presumptuous in an artist interested in a classical notion of perfection. Just as presumptuous, however, would be a featureless surface that pretends to hide the record of the hand. In her recent exhibit, Martin used the palette knife to create a surface that looks—to use a noble but often misunderstood word—disinterested. She neither pretends to more than she can be, nor calls attention to herself; the surface is evenhanded but not uniform.

Martin presents light in a similar spirit. Paint is thinly applied, which lets the canvas glow through the grays. The light shines with equal intensity in the darker and the lighter stripes. Neither color, in short, takes the spotlight: it is the illuminated whole that matters. Her choice of color is apt. Perfection is a shadow's flight across the mind. What color better suggests this than gray? More "colorful" color might prove distracting, and manipulating gray is an excellent way to make fine distinctions, as many dandified artists—Whistler above all—have recognized. Martin does not use grays preciously, however; her grays honor the shimmering variety of those wordless moments when life itself seems enhanced. In *Untitled Six*, which has four stripes, the alternating grays are very close in value; the optical thrumming suggests an almost imperceptible darkening or thickening of consciousness, much as dusk absorbs the day or a fog modifies the ocean air.

The changeable grays bring variety and surprise to the symmetry. In a painting with an equal number of light and dark gray stripes, the bottom stripe may be dark and the top light—a way to be both regular and irregular; here the eye does not get caught in the rules of the symmetry, but instinctively rises toward the lighter range at the top. Indeed, Martin's paintings could almost be made of air, perhaps the most important reason why their symmetry does not become oppressive. They achieve this quality not through gauzy applications of paint, but through the artist's delicate calculations of weight. She balances color, light, and touch in such a way that the images seem suspended between gravity and weightlessness. They appear to hang on the wall of their own accord.

Because Martin's work has oxygen and variety, because it is sensitive to formal concerns—because, in short, she does not cheat—we are willing to accept, seriously accept, the satisfaction that her symmetries bring. When a good surrealist lets a line wander in space, we enjoy the play of spontaneity and freedom; but our eyes cannot settle. When Martin arranges a straight line in unfocused space, we relax in an orderly setting, confident that the grid has not trapped the space. In Martin's work, line and space do not sharply contrast. A line is simply the way space concentrates; and space is the dream of a line. The carefully crafted emptiness invites the mind to fill slowly with its own thoughts, and, perhaps, to glow along with the painting. I have watched the way people look at her work. Most, of course, walk past with the museum glaze upon their eyes, turning their heads this way and that like mechanical dolls. Others, wanting their money's worth, scowl as if she were trying to sell them the Brooklyn Bridge. But there are those pleased to wait.

THERE'S NO WAIT with Julian Schnabel. He is famous for his excess, which admirers consider the stuff of genius and detractors consider the stuffing of a bore. Best known for paintings crammed with pieces of smashed crockery, Schnabel works on a vast scale, and his surfaces range from canvas to tin siding to black velvet. The new show is milder than usual, in part because he has painted his images onto appealing backdrops from Kabuki theater. All the pictures, painted in oil and tempera, have a

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moody, spectral aura; strange shapes and symbols float across dreamy mental landscapes. In the most striking piece, called *Rebirth I: (The Last View of Camilliano Cien Fuegos)*, a pair of eyes hovers in an upside-down Kabuki backdrop of cherry blossoms. A series of bars runs across the pictures, adding to the sense of separation and imprisonment.

Despite their calmer, more decorative character, these pictures are no less grandiose than the earlier Schnabels. They seem desperate to be great. This is understandable, for Schnabel emerged during a period when art was fast losing expressive force. There weren't many new formal ideas around in the 1970s, and minimalism was played out. Those artists like Schnabel who wanted to create powerful work have settled on two principal strategies. First, they try to pump power into art through startling subject matter. In this, they resemble not just the earlier expressionists, but also (especially these new Schnabels) symbolist and surrealist painters. Surprising juxtapositions, heightened feeling, spontaneous eruptions of imagery, dreamy stories, "appropriations" of other art (as in the Kabuki backdrop)—all are popular again. One of Schnabel's works is called *Indecipherable Narratives.*

Secondly, they employ the mannerist strategy of exaggeration. Schnabel has too warm a sensibility to adopt the cool and knowing expressionism found in the work of many of his peers, but he has set the standard for inflation. His paintings are usually huge, not just big. (This suggests important goings-on. The front of the catalog for the Pace show contains a photograph of the artist among vast swaths of painted canvas. His imagination, the photograph implies, leaps beyond the limits of the flesh. A crueler interpretation, however, would be that the material dominates the man.) While not encrusted with antlers and smashed crockery, the current pictures still retain a laden, viscous look.

The drawing is not just rough, but showily rough, as if anything else would be the mark of a sissy. The organization of the space and the arrangement of the shapes is melodramatic rather than dramatic. In one painting, a spectral, transparent head has been placed in the middle of a vast hill-rimmed plain. The head is set off by two ostentatious diagonals, one ending in a feathery curve of red, the other in feathery yellow. In his choice of subject, Schnabel never stoops to the merely important. He requires the

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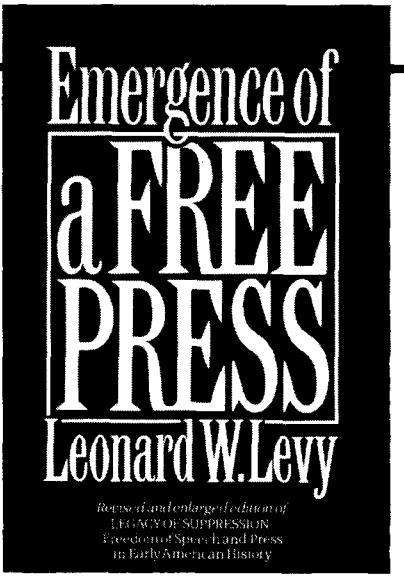

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momentous. The Jungian obsessions of Pollock look by comparison like a walk in the park. Titles are portentous: *Rebirth III: (The Red Box) painted after the death of Joseph Beuys* and *Eulalio Epiclantos After Seeing St. Jean Vianney on the Plains of the Cure d'Ars.*

Like much art criticism, his painting is full of vague, imposing references to writers and artists, not to mention that old song and dance team known as "eros and death." He seems to stuff into his work whatever image, style, or technique impresses his eye. Consider this typical paragraph from the catalog essay, which is to prose what Schnabel's painting is to art:

> Schnabel's painting contains the counterfactual sparkling of externality derived from displaced love. It lives in the depth of the mystery which George Bataille discovered in the wall paintings at the Lascaux caverns, the mystery of the elementary and paradoxical congruence of death and eros which touches us from the dawn of history.

Before a Schnabel painting, one can never forget Schnabel. His exaggerated technique calls attention to his "hand," while his idiosyncratic imagery attests to the play of his inspiration. His fancy is heavy and wearying, without the skipping lightness that can make even the most pessimistic fantasist enjoyable. This aura of grandiose mystery, of sublime connections just beyond the grasp of consciousness, is fashionable. It is accepted as a matter of faith today that the experience of art is beyond telling—that the poetry exists, as it were, in the space between the words. Schnabel, always taking the half-truth as far as possible, imbues his art with a kind of momentous murk. In a recent interview, he said that the "materialism of the painting or everything that's inside of them must make me look at something that's invisible, must create this space outside of the painting. . . . I don't know if that's spirit, or God, or just . . . confusion."

SCHNABEL'S confusion is not without conviction. Those who dislike his art have often impugned both his talent and his sincerity, which is a mistake. He is not just a crude careerist out to make a buck. His art reflects, tellingly, the passions of contemporary taste. The showy shadows in his work, and the clotted pedantry, exactly describe the way many people today conceive of meaning and power. He is the artist for a period that believes substance is a shadow, that celebrates the gaudy theatrical surface, that delights in nostalgic evocations of past strength. What is more, Schnabel not only reflects his period; he also senses its hollowness. This, the most appealing feature in his art, makes him the emblematic painter of his generation. He is the artist desperate for more; he presses and presses and presses, as if he might someday arrive at The Really Big Thing. The hunger is bottomless. The envy of power is almost a declaration of faith.

Schnabel is often praised for his furious energy. ("Energetic" has replaced "interesting" as the adjective of choice when avoiding the disagreeable task of making a judgment.) Energy, of course, is good. So is smarts. So is a passionate desire to make great art. So is a feeling for one's time. But Schnabel has yet to demonstrate that he is better than his time, or that his energy has the character we have the right to expect in great art. There is simply too much gassy exhalation of self, too much pretension and spiritual hubris in the subject matter, too much bombast and self-importance in the arrangement of space and use of materials, to warrant anything more than the conviction that Schnabel is a significant minor artist.

Oddly enough, the Schnabel exhibit reminded me of John Singer Sargent, who is now starring at the Whitney. The two artists, however different, share some important traits. Both are flashy and make a strong initial impression but can rarely sustain the strong second thought. Both want desperately to be liked, and skillfully flatter the taste of the time. Both are vain; both arouse feelings of surfeit. After seeing the Sargent show, I longed for Eakins. Structure and subtraction—beautiful words both. After Schnabel, I remembered Martin. I wanted an art in which size was not the measure of importance, in which emptiness has power, instead of the other way around.

CONVERTIBLE CASTRO

Fidel: A Critical Portrait
by Tad Szulc

(Morrow, 703 pp., $19.95)

The original Great Communicator, holder of the world's record for the longest televised speeches, Fidel Castro surprises—and often charms—his foreign visitors with his casual demeanor and his penchant for talking, for imparting confidences. He seems more at ease driving his guest in a jeep along dusty mountain trails than he does in his presidential office, just as he prefers rambling nocturnal conversations to official visits during normal working hours. American journalists as different as Herbert L. Matthews of the *New York Times* and Jules Dubois of the *Herald Tribune*, who were the first to meet him in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra, immediately fell under the spell of this peculiar rebel. He was then but a young bearded David defying the old Goliath in Havana, the military dictator Fulgencio Batista Zaldívar. After his 1959 victory, Castro met, with equal success, with C. Wright Mills and, later, with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir; they assumed responsibility for conveying to North Americans, and to the rest of the world, the message of this new breed of revolutionary—very radical, but a complete stranger to the mores and customs of Communists formed in the tradition of the Third International.

I met Castro in 1967, in the middle of the night and in a most unlikely place, La Gran Piedra, in the extreme northwest of Cuba. From La Gran Piedra I was immediately treated to a five-day rambling jaunt by jeep along the dirt roads of the Sierra Cristal. Castro expounded at length upon his fundamental, indeed insurmountable, differences with the "Soviet revisionists." Then, at the end of a dinner in honor of his 41st birthday, on August 13, 1967, he called upon my sense of solidarity. He asked me to explain to the world, in a book for which he would provide me with complete documentation, the reasons for his break with the Soviet Union—which would occur, he said, in 1969. "The Cuban people will prefer to feed on the roots of plants, as my *guerrilleros* once did in the Sierra Maestra, and do without electricity, than be dependent upon those Rus-

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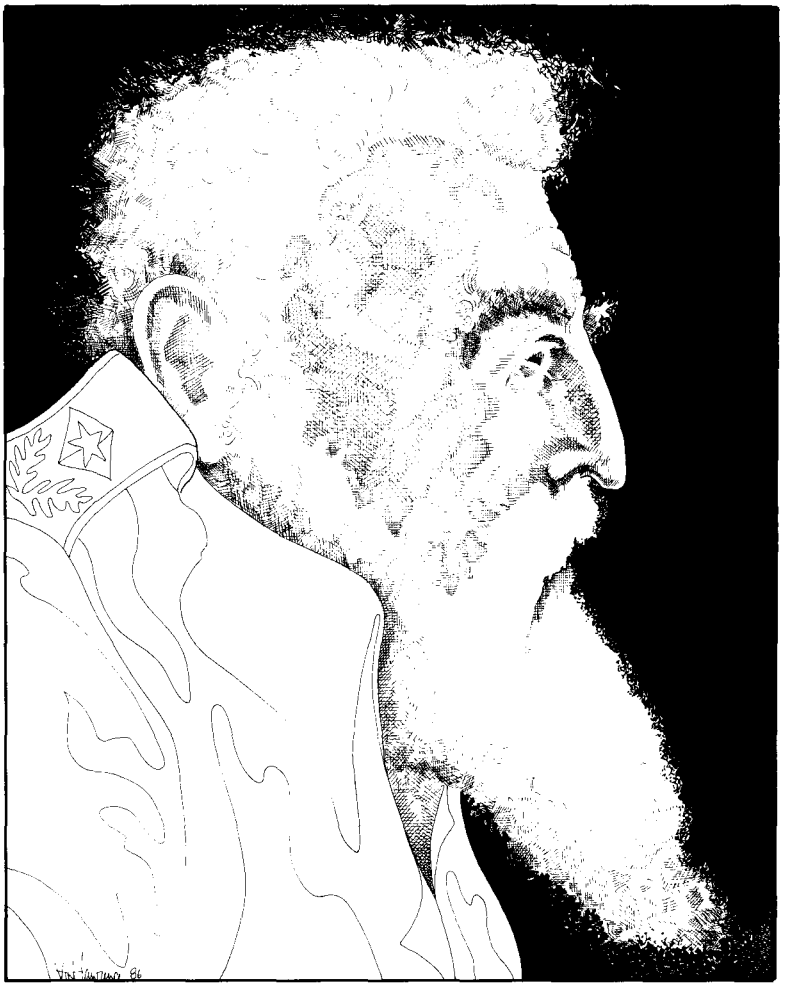
sian 'pseudo-communists' who have nothing but rubles in their heads," he declared to me, with the sort of sincere conviction that leaves no room for debate. Fidel insisted on a completely impartial book, accepting in advance the criticisms I might make of his own political itinerary and of the real state of Cuban society.

Two years later, when my book, *Guerrillas in Power*, was published in France and the United States, Castro was no longer speaking of a break with the Soviet "pseudo-communists." Quite the contrary. He praised their socialist society in extravagant terms: it was the best society that humanity had ever witnessed. Since he could dispute neither the arguments nor the documents contained in my book (most of which came from him, from his archives and his close associates) he excommunicated me on the grounds that I was a bourgeois who "lived well in Paris and in Rome" and who presumed to solve in a day the complex problems of the revolution. Later, in early 1971, through abject police-state methods, Castro compelled the poet Heberto Padilla to confess before the Union of Cuban Writers that he had furnished slanderous information about his country "to the CIA agents K. S. Karol and René Dumont." (Dumont was the author of a critical book, *Is Cuba Socialist?*, published in English in 1974.) Neither Dumont nor I suffered much from this ridiculous denunciation.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Although Cuba is very far from Europe, and although the star of the Castro revolution no longer shines on our continent, I still wanted to learn the reasons for Castro's 180-degree reversal in his relations with the Soviet Union during the latter half of 1968. Knowing Tad Szulc's talents as an investigative reporter, I expected from his book some answers to my old questions. Szulc's name is associated in my mind with his disclosures, published in the *New York Times* in early 1961, about the CIA-sponsored operation aimed at toppling the Castro regime. It took great courage, for him and for his newspaper, to shed such glaring light on this secret enterprise, which was carried on in defiance of all international rules.

For my part, doing my own investigating in Washington at the time, I owed Szulc a mini-scoop: my article dealing with the intentions of the Kennedy administration appeared in Paris on the very day of the anti-Castro landing at the Bay of Pigs. And it was this article that prompted my newspaper to send me to Havana to cover "the civil war in Cuba." Since transportation to the island was suspended for a time, I arrived there only after the invading anti-Castro forces had already surrendered, but still in time to hear Castro proclaim, on May 1, 1961, that his was a socialist revolution. Szulc, on the other hand, had been there during the invasion (somebody told me that he dictated his dispatches to the *New York Times* in Polish, to foil the vigilant and meticulous Cuban censorship). In my later travels through Latin America, I read with great interest and great benefit Szulc's book on the fall of dictators on that unhappy continent (*Twilight of Tyrants*), as well as *The Cuban Invasion*, which he wrote with Karl E. Meyer in 1962.

I thus had many good reasons for looking forward eagerly to his "critical portrait" of Fidel. But alas, I cannot accept its central thesis, which is that Castro was "almost a communist" as early as 1948, and that he decided in 1958, toward the end of his last spring in the Sierra Maestra, alone and in the absence of pressure from abroad, to create a Communist regime in Cuba. Shortly after his victorious entry into Havana, according to Szulc, Castro entered into a secret alliance with the Cuban Communist Party (the PCC) and established a form of clandestine government, made up of the pro-Communists in his entourage and of old-time Communists such as Alfredo Guevara (whose testimony Szulc quotes extensively). It was, supposedly, thanks to this secret "task force" that Fidel slowly but systematically realized his long-planned goal: to place his revolution on the tracks of communism. Under these circumstances, Szulc concludes rather reluctantly, the conflict between Washington and Havana was historically predetermined. There was little the United States could have done to influence the progress of the Cuban revolution. He claims, moreover, that all these facts have "never before been published" and that he gleaned them mostly from interviews he conducted in 1985 with those involved in running Castro's so-called hidden government and in "related activities." His book depends heavily as well on discussions he had in 1984 and 1985 with Castro himself.

Yet all first-person testimony is inherently unreliable, and this is especially true of Szulc's best source: at

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one point in his book he declares, quite correctly, that Castro often manipulates his past. Furthermore, being a scrupulous biographer, Szulc adduces a mass of facts that directly contradict his own thesis, his "scoop." And there is yet another contradiction contained in this "critical portrait": from the beginning to the end of the book, Szulc credits Fidel with some very flattering intellectual, political, and human qualities, all the while documenting some of the sadder results of his stewardship of Cuba, as though there were no cause-and-effect connection between the actions of this remarkable leader and the present state of Cuban society. But the foremost problem raised by Szulc's book concerns Fidel's communism, its origins and its nature.

IN CONTEMPORARY political literature, a Communist is someone who bases his actions on Marx's criticism of capitalism and on Lenin's theory of the proletarian party implanted in the masses to instigate and lead a revolution. The Communist movement being internationalist by definition, moreover, all of its adherents permanently position themselves in relation to Communist revolutions that have already taken place. Some, like the Trotskyists, can be very critical of the evolution of the Soviet Union while still defining themselves according to its premise. But when one has no ties to the specific theory and the specific history of communism, one cannot be a Communist; nor can one lay claim ex post facto to its protocol—as Fidel apparently does.

In the chapters covering the Cuban leader's youth and his "war," Szulc recounts Castro's first political steps as the candidate of the oppositionist Ortodoxo Party in the Cuban congressional elections of 1952. A year later, on July 26, 1953, in order to rouse the country against the Batista dictatorship, Castro organized the armed attack against the Moncada barracks in the suburbs of Santiago. This action was vigorously denounced by the PCC as adventuristic and gangsterlike; Fidel's brother Raúl was barred from Communist Youth for having taken part in it. In his plea before the Santiago tribunal—"History Will Absolve Me"—Fidel laid out the program of his fledgling movement, the 26th of July Movement, by drawing on the radical tradition of Cuban *independistas*. But that tradition has nothing to do with communism; it cannot even be considered anti-capitalist.

When, in December 1956, Castro brought his 82 guerrillas from Mexico to the Sierra Maestra on the yacht Granma, he might have chosen an overland route and avoided a perilous maritime adventure and the loss upon disembarking of 70 comrades at the battle of Alegría de Pío. But the history of the Cuban war of liberation in the last century is replete with similar expeditions, and Castro was consciously imitating them. He wished to give notice to the Cuban people that he was the political heir of José Martí and the other *independista* fighters. Later, at the time of his successful offensive in 1958, his columns always retraced the paths followed earlier by his great ancestors. Some Communists, like Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, joined his victorious train, but generally the Party saw no evidence that Fidel was a Communist, or a Marxist, or someone significantly different from other Latin American "petit bourgeois revolutionaries." For Castro's part, he had little regard for the Communist Party, then or ten years later, and even when he had become officially a Communist, he had little use for other Communists, or for the Soviet Union in particular. At the International Cultural Congress in Havana in 1968, he accused the Communists of being "completely removed from the struggle against imperialism."

IN FACT, the Castro of the Sierra Maestra had little interest in already existing Communist countries. They seemed very distant. His heart beat neither for Mao's victory in China in 1949, nor for Ho Chi Minh's victory at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. He didn't need their example, Szulc rightly observes, to conduct his own guerrilla war. Neither is there any comment by Castro on the 20th Party congress of 1956, nor more generally on the drama of de-Stalinization. He didn't like Tito, but for reasons that had nothing to do with the Titoist model of socialism. In an interview cited by Szulc he claimed proudly to have had no need to study Marx, Engels, or Lenin either to understand the misdeeds of capitalism or to want to fight it. Someone who is outside the Communist movement to such an extent—who shows so little interest in its evolution, its various forms, its victories, and its defeats—is simply not a Communist. Based upon the historical evidence we may conclude that Castro gave no thought, in the Sierra in 1958, to the establishment of a Communist regime in Cuba. He knew practically nothing about the Russian, the Chinese, the Yugoslav precedents.

The truth is that, as he led the 12 survivors of the Granma and his 26th of July Movement, Castro's ambition was to succeed where José Martí had failed. His aim was to secure at last Cuba's full sovereignty with the help of the *humildes*, of all those who suffered under a thinly disguised colonial regime imposed by the United States. As soon as he arrived in Havana in 1959, he forced a 50 percent reduction in rents; he lowered the cost of telephones and electricity; he effected an increase in salaries; he promised to get rid of unemployment. His slogan, "Neither bread without liberty nor liberty without bread," had an anti-Communist ring in its first part; its second part openly aimed at the rhetoric of the "free world," which, especially in Latin America, has accommodated itself quite comfortably to the misery of whole layers of "breadless" populations.

CASTRO CALLED upon the United States to grant $30 billion in assistance to the Latin American countries. Did he think that the Eisenhower administration would respond favorably? It is unlikely. But neither he nor the American public knew that already in March 1959—even before American economic interests were affected by the revolution in Havana—Washington had decided to work toward toppling the barely established government in Cuba. *That* is the most important revelation of Szulc's book.

The method chosen by the Eisenhower administration to meet the new reality in Cuba was the worst among the range of possibilities. It was the product not of some inevitability of history, but rather of the CIA's intoxication by its recent "victories" over Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran and Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala. (Neither of those toppled leaders was a Communist.) Szulc rightly points out that Fidel and his associates—particularly Ché Guevara—were more impressed by the fate of Arbenz than by any other event in recent history. To ensure that a similar scenario would not repeat itself in Cuba, they completely dismantled the old army, the traditional tool of disguised American interventions, and they restructured their own "rebel force," incorporating into it a number of Communists, in the certainty that at least these

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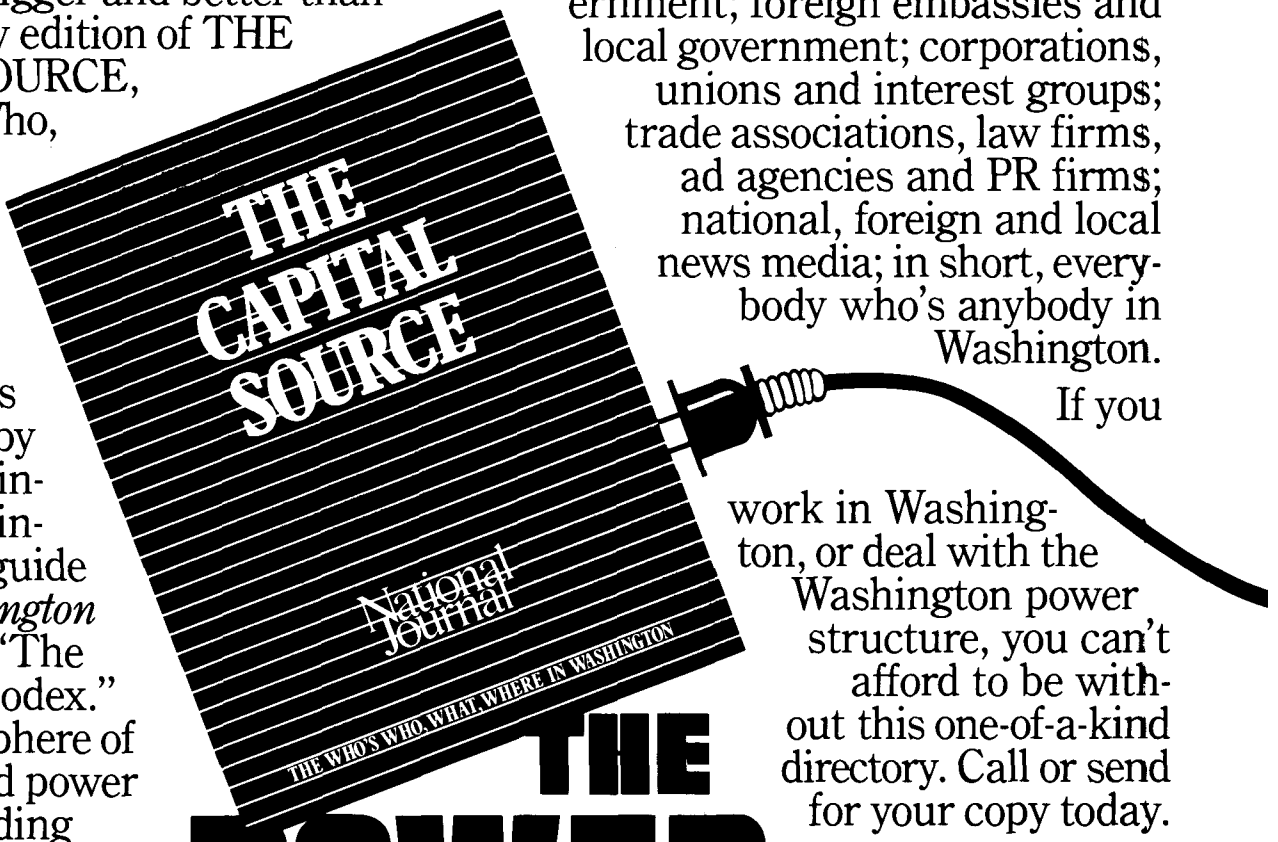

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What the Leaders Read.

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Communists would not play the American game.

This policy was at the root of the first internal crisis in Castro's movement—the forced departure of President Manuel Urrutia Lleó in 1959 and the arrest and trial of Major Hubert Matos. Still, I do not believe that Castro was at the head of a "secret government," or that this crisis was concocted between Castro and the leaders of the Cuban Communist Party. Already in the Sierra Maestra, the charismatic leader of the *barbudos* did not like to share power. Indeed, it was precisely his tendency to hoard power that exposed him to the premonitory criticisms of close allies such as Frank País and Carlos Franqui, who warned him in a friendly manner against his unconscious *caudillo*—"strong man"—tendencies. After the victory, of course, those tendencies bloomed all the more naturally, since each of Castro's decisions was transformed into a mandate by the enthusiastic crowds in the streets. Thus, to secure the departure of President Urrutia, Castro asked Franqui in the greatest secrecy to announce in his paper, *Revolución*, that "Fidel is resigning," whereupon Castro disappeared for 24 hours. His reappearance came only after huge popular demonstrations of support. He returned to calm things down, and to make his demand: Urrutia goes, Castro stays. To be sure, Castro's methods of operation did not exclude the formation of task forces on specific problems; but in the end he merely placed before them faits accomplis of his own creation. In Castro's Cuba, there was never any secret government, or any collection of individuals or groups able to express its own views.

In the early 1960s, Castro entered into a marriage of convenience with the Soviet Union to confront the American threat. He had proclaimed the socialist character of his revolution without knowing precisely what he meant by it; and immediately he launched into improbable schemes that led to the Caribbean crisis of 1962. After the crisis, Castro maintained his relations with the Soviets, but he knew very well that they could not be trusted—in 1962 they had been ready to sacrifice him on the altar of reconciliation between Khrushchev and Kennedy. For this reason and others, he spoke unhesitatingly of a divorce with Moscow. He enjoyed insulting the Soviet Union—for example, by sending a delegation of insignificant individuals to Moscow for the 50th anniversary of the revolution. During the '60s, when the slogan of the Soviets and their clients was "Peace in Vietnam," Castro rallied instead to the Chinese slogan "Victory in Vietnam"; he even went it one better by calling for "the need to have two, three, several Vietnams in Latin America." But after the death of Ché Guevara in Bolivia in 1968, Castro realized that the continent would not budge. Perhaps this recognition was one of the reasons for his sudden adoption of the Soviet model. I recall how shocked all his friends in Europe were by his approval of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and by his praise of the Soviet Union.

AFTER THE OUSTER of Urrutia, Cuba existed in a complete institutional void. Castro wanted neither a parliamentary system, which would have been unfavorable to both the *humildes* and the revolutionaries, nor Soviet-style elections, with 99 percent of the votes going to a single slate. He set up organizations—ORI (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations), then PURSC (United Party of Cuban Socialist Revolution), then the new PCC—but he let them decay. He refused to be even partially constrained by party structures. In the Soviet Union he sought a counterweight to the United States, but quickly showed himself reluctant to accept the discipline of the Soviet bloc. The list of Fidel's "coups" is too long to enumerate, but it is easy enough to see that from one scheme to the next, he contrived to create a void around himself. No strong personality was able to come to terms with Fidel's socialist *caudillismo*.

The most striking departure was that of Ché Guevara, and Szulc should have applied more of his investigative talent to this development. In the course of investigating it, he would have found some answers to the other central problem of Cuban society: its dependency on the culture of sugar, which still represents about 80 percent of its exports. One has only to read the Cuban political literature of the prerevolutionary period, and of the first few years after Castro came to power, to see that the left was ferociously opposed to the tyranny of "His Majesty Sugar." Shortly after the enactment of agrarian reform in 1960, Castro asked, with typical impatience and against the advice of his associates, that without any further delay the Cubans themselves destroy some of the sugar plantations and diversify their agriculture. But three years later, at the end of an extended trip to the Soviet Union, in order to make peace with the Soviets after the missile crisis of 1962, Castro reversed himself, and announced that Cuba should aim for a record sugar production. In return, he promised to free his people from the "slavery" of the sugarcane harvesting, which would no longer be done manually but with modern tools provided by the Soviets. The prototype of the magnificent machine that would revolutionize the harvesting, he informed his countrymen, was personally designed by "Comrade Khrushchev, who has extraordinary experience in agriculture and a perfect knowledge of machines."

Because of his experience as minister of industry, however, Ché Guevara already knew what to make of the machines produced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries. Often depicted as a utopian and a romantic, but coming from a much more industrialized country than Cuba, this Argentinean was the most modern and realistic of the Cuban leaders. From afar, consulting the statistical data about the economic power of the Soviet Union, Guevara had believed that that nation could help Cuba become a showplace for socialism in Latin America. But as the goods from the East began to arrive, he was the first to understand that something had gone wrong in societies that could only produce such mediocre products, products that were almost useless. He concluded that the material inducements offered in such countries "didn't put stars in the eyes of the ambitious or stimulate their creativity." Ché never accepted the fait accompli of Fidel's sugar policy. In his last public address, in Algiers on February 25, 1965, he specifically stated that he saw no "mutual benefit" in the sale by poor countries of raw goods that cost boundless human suffering and were in futile competition with machinery built in the large modern factories of wealthy countries.

AFTER GUEVARA, it was the turn of Carlos Franqui, the former head of Radio Rebelde in the Sierra, to depart. The son of a peasant, he too did not believe that "socialist" Cuba had any future if it was to become the "sugar bowl of the Soviet Union." Thus Castro lost a longtime friend (they went back to 1947)—the friend most attuned to the problems of agriculture, and the only

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one who understood the paramount role of an independent and lively press. Above all, he lost someone who, in the name of their shared revolution, was not afraid to warn him that he was making a mistake, that he was on the wrong path. In his memoirs, published a few years ago, Franqui relates a droll story about Camilo Cienfuegos Gorriarán, the most popular among the *comandantes barbudos*, known for his jokey slogan: "Fidel, you're doing good!" Camilo had a premonition that he would die young, and one day he remarked to Castro laughingly: "We must write the history of our revolution quickly because you, you will grow old, you will end up telling a lot of tall stories, but by then there will no longer be at your side a Camilo to tell you 'Fidel, you're doing bad!' " The premonition came to pass: shortly afterward the young fighter was lost at sea, and his leader is now old and lonely, surrounded by yes-men who are not about to tell him that he is doing bad.

This isolation has not escaped Szulc's attention. He notes that Fidel was deeply affected by the death of his two closest friends, Celia Sánchez and René Vallejo. I suspect that he was also equally shaken by the suicide of two leading figures of his revolution and his regime, Haydée Santamaría and Osvaldo Dorticás Torrado. Heroine of the attack on the Moncada, in which she lost her brother and her fiancé, Santamaría shot herself through the head on July 26, 1980, the 27th anniversary of her first battle with Fidel. As for Dorticás, former president of the republic and theoretician of the "Castroist heresy" of the 1960s, he committed suicide in June 1983 by firing a bullet into the back of his neck. Perhaps, as the official Cuban version has it, they had personal reasons for putting an end to their lives, but many Cubans think that their suicides were a desperate form of political protest.

PROTEST against what? I remember Fidel's criticism of the Soviet development model during that birthday party on the Isle of Pines in 1967. Some 20 *comandantes*, among them Vallejo, who was more pleasant than ever, echoed his criticism in the name of their own more revolutionary tradition. They called upon the conscience and the heroism of the workers, and they rejected the search for self-enrichment to the detriment of the weakest, the least productive. They wanted to be the vanguard for

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all the *humildes* of Latin America. And they wanted not to submit to the will of either of the two superpowers, one as bad as the other. But their hopes were not realized. In the end, Castro concluded that the Soviet model was appropriate for Cuba.

But the same causes produce the same effects, and "the first socialist nation in the Americas" suffers the same ills as the "birthplace of socialism": depoliticization, low productivity, and gross inequalities in income distribution, due for the most part to the existence of an underground economy that always thrives during periods of prolonged scarcity. To be sure, nobody goes hungry, as they did under the old regime; everybody has a job; and all the young receive an education. But the same can be said of the Eastern European countries. These accomplishments do not suffice in the minds of workers to make up for the frustration caused by the loss of any political dimension to their lives. It was circumstances like these that gave rise to Solidarity in Poland, and that have produced in the Soviet Union itself, since the loosening of the ties of censorship, a significant critical literature and art. In sum, everything that is now being rightly observed about the moral and economic crises of these societies applies equally to Cuba. Unlike Gorbachev, however, Castro does not even countenance the expression of the critical voices necessary for the "modernization of the system." He rules over what Szulc calls "a cultural wasteland."

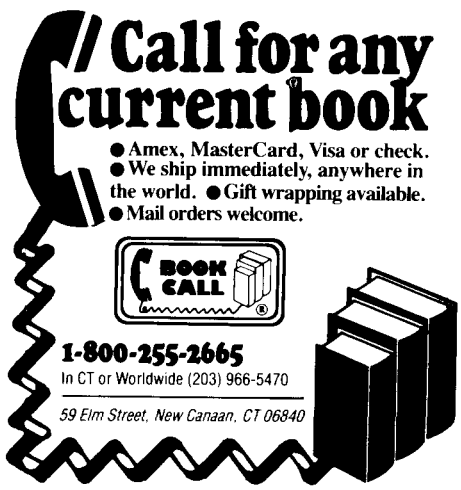
THE PUBLICATION of Szulc's impressive work coincides with Castro's 60th birthday, and with the 30th anniversary of the landing in the Sierra Maestra. At the end of October of this year, on the occasion of the COMECON summit of Eastern bloc nations in Moscow, *Pravda* published a front-page photograph of all the participants. The old hero of the Sierra Maestra appears in a modest place, very far from Gorbachev, somewhere between the leaders of Bulgaria and Vietnam. He is taller than all the others, the only one flaunting a smartish military uniform, but he is not the youngest in the group. Castro's beard, well groomed, is now graying, almost white, and his gaze, obviously tired, makes him seem older than his age. Is it here, in the midst of the Soviet family, that the boldest rebel to disembark from the Granma 30 years ago hoped to find himself?

Having been one of the most imaginative revolutionaries of his time, he appears in the *Pravda* "family portrait" as the most conservative. And he is alone in this group for having accumulated all the positions of power: he is head of state and of the government, as well as secretary general of his Party. His obstinacy in his own socialist *caudillismo* makes him into a figure at once anachronistic and a little Shakespearean. For he is not one of those "tyrants" whom Szulc has known in other places in Latin America: he is a revolutionary *caudillo*, dedicated to the cause of his people, who took upon himself the overwhelming task of leading them alone toward a radiant future. The key to Fidel's personality does not lie in his adherence to a doctrine—for which Szulc has searched in vain—but in his conviction that since he risked his life more than anyone else, he has acquired titles of revolutionary nobility superior to those who were less heroic. He is convinced—and here Szulc echoes him—that in his struggle he ran greater risks than did Lenin during the Bolshevik Revolution, or Tito during his long struggle against the Waffen SS, or Mao Zedong during 22 years of war against the most powerful armies in Asia.

"I do not like such dependence upon one man as exists in Cuba today, nor the virtually absolute power that this one man possesses," wrote C. Wright Mills in *Listen, Yankee* (1960). Castro has always justified his concentration of power by citing the threat from North America. Would things have been different if the United States had adopted a different attitude toward him? I tend to think so, because in a more relaxed climate, freed from his very Cuban complex of "historical fatalism," Castro might have shed this consuming feeling of his own indispensability. He would have fulfilled the task closest to his heart in Moncada and the Sierra Maestra: that of guaranteeing the independence of Cuba—after which he would gladly have distanced himself from the Soviets, with whom he entered only into a marriage of convenience, a marriage that sometimes strikes him as insufferable. Yet Washington wants him to break with Moscow before it establishes a mutually acceptable modus vivendi with him. This is putting the cart before the horse; it suffices to read Szulc's thoroughly documented chapters about American policy toward revolutionary Cuba to understand Castro's feeling that without the Soviet shield he would be at the mercy of an American government obsessed with the idea of toppling his regime.

The reasons for this obstinacy surely do not lie in Castro's conversion to communism. John F. Kennedy once told Jean Daniel, editor of the *Nouvel Observateur*, that he got along better with the Communist Tito than with the anti-Communist de Gaulle. In January 1979, on the White House lawn, I heard President Jimmy Carter evoke the United States' revolutionary past to demonstrate his understanding of Deng Xiaoping's Chinese communism. Thus Washington knows how to pursue different policies toward different Communist regimes. Indeed, it is an approach that is perfectly justified in the light of the growing differentiation among those regimes. Why, then, doesn't the United States attempt to pursue a similarly flexible and fruitful policy in its own hemisphere? Because of the Monroe Doctrine?

BECAUSE HE relied so heavily on oral testimony, Szulc failed to avoid some flagrant and needless errors. Here are a few examples: René Dumont did not die after the publication of his book about Cuba; he is in very good health, and he plays an important part in the French ecological movement (he will probably be its candidate in the presidential elections of 1988). Neither Jean-Paul Sartre nor Bertrand Russell participated in the International Cultural Congress held in Havana in 1968. Camilo Cienfuegos was never a Communist, although his brother Osmany was. (It happens in many families.) In his conversations with Castro on the subject of the Caribbean crisis of 1962, Szulc reproduces without comment Castro's absurd claim that in the number of strate-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gic missiles the United States has superiority over the Soviet Union, apparently ignoring the fact that the two superpowers possess already a capacity for overkill that permits them to destroy one another 20 times over. And last, but hardly least: if, as Szulc claims, Castro is sure of the "supreme loyalty" of all his "fellow revolutionaries," how does Szulc explain the departure of so many of Castro's closest friends, and, more recently, the strange wave of suicides in Cuba? I have the impression that Szulc's laudable wish to be objective about his voluble subject has led him here to embellish his "critical portrait." But a judicious reader, knowing how to make allowances for these things, will find much to appreciate in this lively book.

K. S. KAROL

K. S. Karol is the author of, among other books, *Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution*. His *Between Two Worlds: The Life of a Young Pole in Russia, 1939-46* will be published by New Republic Books next month. This article was translated by Laura E. Obolensky.

WALKING TO BYZANTIUM

Between the Woods and the Water
by Patrick Leigh Fermor

(Elisabeth Sifton Books/Viking, 248 pp., $18.95)

A Time of Gifts
by Patrick Leigh Fermor

(Penguin, 304 pp., $5.95 paper)

In 1934 an 18-year-old British scapegrace named Patrick Leigh Fermor hiked from Holland to Constantinople, gathering nouns where they lay and leaving behind him a trail of footprints that no doubt resembled exclamation marks. Forty years later, after distinguished military service and five books, he sat down to write about that trip. The first volume of his travel-memoir, *A Time of Gifts*, published in 1978, carried the author from Holland to Esztergom, in Hungary. The second volume, *Between the Woods and the Water*, ends short of the Bosphorus by 500 miles. These two books give us a unique glimpse—elating and mournful—of a lost world: Europe, particularly Hungary and Romania, between the wars. They are beguiling and curious. They have even been mistaken for great prose.

It is easy to see how that notion got about. Leigh Fermor is a virtuoso, in the slightly pejorative 18th-century sense of the word. Like the Hungarian Count Jenö, "everything aroused his curiosity and sent him climbing unwieldily up the library steps." Leigh Fermor travels and writes (as he talks, we are told) exuberantly. But the ordinary English virtuoso—George Eliot's Reverend Camden Farebrother or his numerous 18th- and 19th-century peers—was a person of contemplative habits and constricted territory. To that placid tradition, Leigh Fermor brings a more exorbitant soul, the kind that inhabits "Wild Geese, clan chieftains, recusant Catholics, Jacobite exiles and soldiers of fortune trailing the puissant pike." At 18, he did not merely travel: he crusaded in the shade of Charlemagne. He scouted the land, the faces, and the tongues around him for traces of a chivalric past. He took a herald's tour of Europe and stayed on, eventually settling in Greece.

The English have always had a soft spot for exiled idiosyncrates who send home glorious prose. That is why both Stephen Spender and Alastair Forbes were able to praise so fervently the first installment of this travel-memoir. Spender called *A Time of Gifts* "a prose poem," and Forbes said, "It is a joy to find a British writer once more making such good and full use of the matchless richness of his own language." Leigh Fermor has certainly brought full employment to the English lexicon, as well as to those of several other languages, but he has barely limbered its syntactical muscle. Into his prose he crams everything from Molière to Jeeves, King Carol to Charlie Chaplin. Leigh Fermor digresses (as if digression were possible in his writing) on everything, especially the movements of any race that ever crossed the plains of central Europe; he includes such diversions as a brilliant excursus on why the Romanian shepherd with whom he camped one night high in the Carpathians was Uniat Christian and not Orthodox. Everything here is blindingly fascinating, but the glue that binds these arcana is fundamentally weak.

English prose has an almost infinite capacity to absorb lexical particles such as nouns and adjectives ("the delicious, boiling hot, scarlet and orange carp soup bursting with paprika"), but it can only do so effectively by matching them with the strength of its verbs. Good English prose balances lexical diversity and syntactical force for a simple reason. Prose is relational; it must pass judgment upon itself. You cannot strike ideas from nouns unless you pick them up and pound them together or give them pattern, and you cannot do that without energetic verbs. Nor do nouns become interesting until you strike ideas from them. Prose should be "nervous" in the archaic sense of the word: "Well strung; strong; vigorous."

With plenty of nouns and few verbs, of course, you get congeries, the trope of heaping and agglomeration. This, according to Samuel Johnson, is the virtuoso's besetting sin. In *Rambler 82* Johnson satirizes a collector whose entirely unsifted "accumulations" have cost him his fortune. In the next *Rambler* he draws the moral. "A man," he writes,

> who thinks only on the particular object before him, goes not away much illuminated by having enjoyed the privilege of handling the tooth of a shark, or the paw of a white bear; yet there is nothing more worthy of admiration to a philosophical eye, than the structure of animals.

No pile of "particular objects" bears comparison to a "structure." Johnson's distinction between a shark's lone tooth and the symmetry of the whole fish can be readily applied to English prose. Details mean nothing until they acquire relation. Where structure is missing, the beauty of the beast is darkened.

As an amateur historian and linguist, Leigh Fermor constantly tugs at the web of relations that gives history and language significance. But as a stylist, he lays bricks without mortar. The defects

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of his prose are most evident when one considers an extreme example: the long sentence—Forbes claims it is the longest in English—from *Mani*, his book about the southern Peloponnese, published in 1958. It endures for nearly two full pages, and yet, following a single, brief independent clause ("I thought of the abundance of strange communities:"), it is just an appendix of Greek enclaves scattered around the globe. With colon and gazetteer, a writer can do only so much.

Congeries leads to asyndeton (that is, a dearth of conjunctions), prose that operates without connective tissue and tires the reader quickly. Leigh Fermor indulges more often in relentless polysyndeton (the opposite of asyndeton), a sea full of pack ice where nouns and adjectives float in congeries on a current of conjunctions. Here is Leigh Fermor in his restrained mode, riding a horse called Malek through Hungary:

> When a village fell behind, we were alone once more in a flat and now familiar landscape, half desert and half sown, with its flocks and its herdsmen and its solitary sweep-wells and its cloud-processions along the horizon. In the late afternoon we were picking our way through another enormous herd of cattle with those long straight horns. Soon Gypsy hovels appeared and a straggle of kilns and sheds and thousands of bricks set out to dry and a rambling overgrown churchyard; the solider houses multiplied and we were on the outskirts of the substantial country-town of Mezötúr.

This is bead stringing, and it is just as tiring as asyndeton.

When Leigh Fermor plumps for ornamental diction, as he frequently does, his customarily weak verbs take on "poetic" character, the strength of which is metaphorical and often abstract. The effect (and the source) of such ornate, polysyndetic prose is romantic, as this extravagant example from *Between the Woods and the Water* demonstrates:

> The conifers abdicated when the hardwoods began to outnumber them; and the ravine, deepening fast, coaxed the trees higher and higher until the oaks, mantled with ivy, pronged with the antlers of dead boughs and tufted with mistletoe, grew into giants. Clearings of beech opened their forest-chambers and bracken gave way to mares' tails, hemlock and the tatters of old man's beard. The damp, which covered everything with moss, looped the branches with creepers and plumed the clefts and forks overhead, and the flaking bark, shaggy with lichen, greaved the tree-trunks like metal tainted with verdigris, filling the slanting world underneath with a stagey green-grey light.

Richard Feverel, with a stouter constitution, might have lived to compose this passage, which sounds like weak Shelley, average Rossetti, or strong Symonds. It is astonishing that such florid language should be written in the 1980s. But is it good? No. It is prose only by being "discourse not metrical." It is also, as James Sutherland says of Symonds, "poetry gone bad."

The two quotations above represent the extremes of Leigh Fermor's verb choices—the first flaccid, the second hyperbolic. He bounds constantly from one to the other. The latter quotation also proves Forbes correct in saying that Leigh Fermor is "the master of the set-piece parenthesis," or what we otherwise call the purple patch. In this he simply inherits the conventional weakness of travel writing. He is a sucker for moonlight and high places. Travel writers have always had trouble weaving their observations into a coherent narrative; details tend to be savored in themselves and not as parts of a larger pattern. It

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takes a writer with truly relational, nervous prose—Jan Morris, say, or Bruce Chatwin—to order the welter of sensations that arise from travel. Leigh Fermor does so only at intervals.

When a writer combines unstructured amplitude, polysyndeton, and a zillion nouns and adjectives with verbs that tend to be either frail or histrionic, he creates a medium in which bad rhetoric flourishes like mold. It will not always be as jubilantly bad as it is in the passage in *A Time of Gifts* where, commenting on the Reformation, Leigh Fermor says, "The stimulating ding-dong of the Reform was at work." No one can reasonably expect to find much of this. But the reader will find plenty of passages like,

> A restless geometry of fireflies darted about under the spatulate volume of the chestnut trees, and getting up one night to go to bed, we found emerald-coloured tree-frogs smaller than threepenny-bits clinging to the leaves like miniature green castaways on rafts.

Why establish the tininess and greenness of tiny green tree frogs twice? Or this: "Winnowing followed, when clouds of skied grain sparkled and fell and then sparkled again as the next wooden shovelful transfigured the afternoon with chaff." *Skied*? Leigh Fermor is an engine for converting nouns into romantic verbs and participles. Sometimes, from exhaustion, he is just banal: "The stars were unbelievably dense, to gaze up turned one into a multi-millionaire, and better still, the Perseids were still dropping like fireworks."

Inevitably, amid all this false splendor and copia, there are moments of good writing. And despite the frustrations of Leigh Fermor's style, I confess I look forward to the next volume in this series; it will be, as the first two volumes were, delightfully choked with odd information and headlong rhetoric. There is a pleasing, faintly antiquarian feel to Leigh Fermor's pages, as if one had picked up a dim printing of Thomas Coryat by mistake. *Between the Woods and the Water* should have been set in 17th-century typography, where the odd is accentuated and the substantive capitalized.

Describing his feelings on first seeing Magyar prose, Leigh Fermor also captures the reader's response to his own writing:

> On a printed page the fierce-looking sentences let slip no hint of their drift. Those tangles of S's and Z's! Gazing at the peppery strings of diaereses and the tempests of acute accents all swaying one way like wind-blown corn, I wondered if I would ever be able to extort a meaning.

Meaning is the last thing one wants to extort from Leigh Fermor. One wants, instead, to savor his enthusiasm and to wonder what kind of youth it was who, upon entering the region of Kiskunság on horseback in 1934, could say of a 13th-century horde, "So this was where the Cumans had ended up!"

VERLYN KLINKENBORG

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BIRTH IN THE U.S.A.

Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950 by Judith Walzer Leavitt

(Oxford University Press, 284 pp., $21.95)

Childbirth is one of the two incontrovertible differences between women and men. (The other is lactation.) But as Judith Walzer Leavitt points out in the opening sentence of her evocation of this peculiarly female experience, childbirth is also "a vital component in the social definition of womanhood." The exploration of all the implications of that observation, however, is not among her purposes. In only one respect, as we shall see, does she identify how childbirth helped to define woman. The broader ramifications of such a definition—for a woman who does not want to bear a child, for a woman who cannot, for a woman who bears more than she wishes—are not examined, though obviously they are pertinent. Nor does Leavitt examine the ways in which such a social definition has affected men, though women's reproductive capacity has been recognized as a source of men's envy, of men's insistence that women must do for men what men cannot do by themselves. Men—and some women, too—have also used childbearing to limit women's social roles in the name of celebrating or appreciating women's fecundity. Leavitt's purpose is not to probe these larger issues. As a mother and a professor of the history of medicine and science at the University of Wisconsin, her primary aim is to recapture the changing history over two centuries of the experience of childbirth.

The story she relates avoids neither controversy nor complexity. The first-hand accounts she quotes from women who bore children under trying and often dangerous circumstances are compelling and affecting and sometimes, to a man and non-physician, almost hair-raising. (A professional woman who has read this book told me that, good as it is, she would not let her pregnant daughter-in-law read it, because much that can go wrong in childbirth is graphically depicted in its pages.) If men, as anthropologists and psychoanalysts tell us, have long envied women's ability to produce new human beings, they must have been thinking more of the product than of the process. *Brought to Bed*, in short, is a book for men as well as women.

The pages that recreate the experience of childbirth are a significant and powerful part of Leavitt's story, but the book also has a thesis: that until the 20th century women were in control of childbirth and that this control was of deep personal significance to them. Historically, men have had little to do with bringing children into the world. Indeed, in the United States, male physicians did not participate in the event at all until the late 18th century. Leavitt's revisionist conclusion is that even when men did attend births, women retained control over who was present and what was done. She quotes from 19th-century male doctors who were prevented from performing a procedure—such as shaving off pubic hair—that the expectant mother objected to. Contrary to what some other historians have told us, women friends and neighbors continued to be present at births even after male physicians came on the scene. It was the doctors who were isolated; they were often made to feel in need of instruction, especially since they received almost none in medi-

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cal schools. "But whether it was head or breach, hand or foot, man or monkey that was defended from my uninstructed finger by the distended membranes," one honest male physician wrote about his endeavor to help a birth, "I was as uncomfortably ignorant, with all my learning, as the foetus itself that was making all the fuss." Many male physicians before the mid-19th century had never even seen a birth before being called upon to facilitate one.

A second revisionist point Leavitt insists upon is that the mothers themselves chose to permit male physicians into the room long given over to women alone. In the late 18th century, upper-class women (only they could afford the cost) began to ask male physicians to be present at births. The assumption was that in the case of a difficult birth trained physicians could provide help, particularly with forceps and drugs, which midwives rarely used. One consequence was that male physicians intervened in the birth process, as midwives tended not to. After all, Leavitt observes, a doctor, as a lone outsider, had to justify his presence in some fashion. The intervention, she quickly adds, was not necessarily bad. Male physicians were as likely to counsel against too quick or irresponsible a use of forceps as were the women who attended childbirth.

THROUGHOUT THE 19th century, an increasing number of women invited physicians to their confinement, which almost invariably took place at home under circumstances set by the mother and her female supporters. The number of doctor-attended births, however, did not reach a majority until around the end of the century, for midwives were always cheaper. Yet despite the growing use of male physicians whose skills were superior to those of midwives, the survival rate of mothers did not improve. Leavitt calculates that in 1900 the mortality rate for mothers was about 65 times higher than it is today, and not much different, so far as can be told, from what it had been in the middle of the 19th century.

The one indisputable gain for women in return for their faith in male obstetrical "science" was celebrated by Fanny Longfellow in 1847, when she became the first woman in the United States to use ether during childbirth. "I never was better or got through confinement so comfortably," she reported to her sister-

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Summer Elegy

Cynthia, the things we did when
from the white cotton dress
the unhooked halter slid again
from sunburnt shoulders!

My slow hands would unfix it,
and two white quarter-moons
unpeeled there like a frisket
in shuttered afternoons.

Twisted like almond branches
or olives, but not perverse;
like beach fires, like the language
of salty Propertius,

we took one shape in water
while in green depths a dove
grounded its gurgling 'Oos' at the
Protean change of love.

Time lent us the whole island.
Now weight and image fade
like dusk in the wet sand
from thigh to shoulder blade.

Salt dried in every fissure.
From the long, sun-struck day,
I peeled the papery tissue
of its dead flesh away,

and wished, as my breath blew it
from reanointed sin,
my moles and scars could do it:
a new life, a new skin.

The bay will shine like tinfoil,
crimp like excelsior.
Nothing we did was sinful,
but she won't come anymore.

A halcyon sea. No sail.
The bay like cigarette paper
smoothed by her red thumbnail
on a white hotel table.

Shells near a grey village lean-to,
pink-palated, a salt breeze
whose labials re-enter
the soft shells of her ears.

Well, so long, thighs and theories,
but, if Time asks, say yes,
Oh, not forever, but there is
an earthly paradise,

which was bounded on the north
by Point du Cap, to the west
by Reduit, to the dry south
by Vieuxfort, and to the east?

If flesh were drawn and quartered
to the four winds, its quest
would be the same, the unaltered
China of a cupped breast.

The snake hangs its old question
on olive or almond tree;
I had her breast to rest on,
The rest is History.

Summer Elegy II

Nothing hurts as much as the word 'California,'
the wincing light of Los Angeles. In unfinished Venice
a fresco interrupted in its prophecy looks phonier
than what it promised: gondolas, palazzos, its own Bridge of Sighs.
It fades under its graffiti, a transferred paradise.

Sharper than the smell of eucalyptus is the ammonia
of the beach's comfort stations, mist sprayed the air.
My heart could contain the Pacific then, now it is only a-
nother grey waste, with soiled breakers in the flare
of a summer sunset, radios and barbecues. So, here

too the carousel revolves its rusty horizon, lonelier
than an abandoned carnival where the carved white horses
creak to a stop, and the freaks move their paraphernalia
to another beach: Malibu, San Francisco, Santa Barbara.

We recited the names of the avenues, La Cienega,
Pico; I understood the false fronts, the fake Spanish facades,
the dusty brooms of the palms; I was eager
to make a clean sweep, to find the poetry in roof-wide ads

for the latest release, the billboards plugging a Sony, a
new way to live, ours, we were sure, a second-best bet, a Hertz
or an Avis; now so many songs have California
in them, and the H in Hollywood hurts.

I hadn't thought to make light of this: the light of
Los Angeles. I meant it painting the hillside pines.
I meant it, lying under the cool sheets, but it was only the right of
any ruin to burst into flowers briefly, strange flowers, fresh vines.

There's sometimes more pain in a pop song than all of Cambodia,
and that's the trouble, the heart puts love above it
all, any other pain—Chernobyl, a mass murder—
and the world's slow stain is something we cannot remove
by shtupping or scrubbing, and that's the irony of it.

The irony of it, Walter, is that we can never own
another heart. I must smile, or die, hence this lightness.
Hence this fake chic, these stanza windows like a posh boutique
in a semi-tropical desert. Shall I stop the jokes and speak
for the soul? Soul, was she not your fair and final brightness?

Didn't your bodies fit perfectly? Bone to bone, a
miracle of calibration and metre, didn't the shape
of lips, and the small well under her throat,
rhyme easily as my hand fitting under her damp nape?
She fitted the ribs of my body like a boat.

Shoot the end of this now. Let the last line
be an empty lot after work. West Venice changes its gels
for the fade. We become, said Borges, books when we are dying.
I died and did not become any book in the City of Angels.

Derek Walcott

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continued from page 39
in-law. "I feel proud to be the pioneer to less suffering for poor, weak womankind. This is certainly the greatest blessing of this age, and I am glad to have lived at the time of its coming and in the country which gives it to the world."

Women's quest for relief from pain reached a climax in the early 20th century, with what was popularly known as "twilight sleep." An innovation of German physicians, twilight sleep was actually not a painkiller, but a destroyer of the memory of pain that had been endured. A combination of the drugs scopolamine and morphine, the new method was highly praised by women because not only did they not recall the pain, but they felt less fatigued after the ordeal. The initial reaction of a woman's body to childbirth, however, was as violent as ever. Thus special, constraining twilight sleep cribs were designed for women during labor. Many women, some of whom were active feminists, worked to convince physicians to support the method, since a number of male doctors had serious doubts about its safety. The whole debate came to a quick and sad conclusion, however, when a woman who had been active on behalf of twilight sleep died in childbirth in 1914.

Although Leavitt presents the twilight sleep episode straightforwardly, she is ambivalent about its consequences. She concludes, for example, that the method "helped to distance women from their bodies" by putting them to sleep and into hospitals. The experience, she thinks, led to the practice, which became common after 1920, of having births in hospitals rather than in the mother's home. When women gave birth under twilight sleep, they "did not experience one of their bodies' most powerful actions and thus lost touch with their own physical potential." Yet earlier Leavitt had welcomed the introduction of anesthesia. In brief, sleeping through the experience was not the objectionable aspect; what troubles Leavitt is the shift from home to hospital.

THAT SHIFT IS the subject of the second part of her argument. So long as births were in the home, women controlled the process, whether male physicians were present or not. When births occurred in hospitals, women lost that authority: they "became the alienated party." At the turn of the century, about 90 percent to 95 percent of all births occurred at home. By 1940, over half were taking place in hospitals; by 1950, the figure had reached almost 90 percent. Once again, as in the move to permit male physicians into the birth room, Leavitt ascribes the change, even as she disapproves of it, to women, and to their constant search for safety and a surcease from pain. Physicians, of course, preferred the shift for a variety of reasons, not least of which was that aseptic conditions were easier to provide in a hospital than in a mother's bedroom.

Leavitt's principal point is that women have always wanted and depended upon their female supporters. They "knew from their own confinements and from witnessing the births of others what to do, and they could be trusted to do it. The importance of this sex-shared experience cannot be overstated in understanding women's childbirth experiences." If that relationship was so valuable, however, why did women give it up and enter hospitals, alone and alienated? The question is particularly insistent since Leavitt shows that the shift, whatever it may have promised, did not bring any significant improvement, for two decades or more, in maternal mortality.

Leavitt offers answers, but they are not especially convincing. She believes that by the 1920s medicine had become so arcane, so surrounded by "mystification," that women were simply taken in by it. But wasn't medicine always mysterious to lay people, even in the early 19th century? Leavitt's second suggestion is more profound, but no more convincing. It is that women could not, in a new age of geographical mobility and urbanization, find women friends to attend them, as they had in the 19th century. Socially, however, this argument is difficult to accept. First of all, as late as 1920, almost half (49 percent) of all Americans still lived *outside* cities of 2,500 people or more. For another, even in large cities there are neighborhoods and institutions that bring people together. More promising, then, is Leavitt's subsidiary explanation, that the increase in the number of hospitals made the shift feasible. In any case, it is not clear that when women first began to give birth in hospitals they perceived the change in experience in the way Leavitt does today.

The last few pages of Leavitt's book address this point in another way. She emphasizes the alienation that many women feel bearing children in sterile, impersonal hospital rooms. In answer to an author's query in the *New York Times*, Leavitt received some 200 replies, mostly from women about their birthing experiences in hospitals. Her conclusion is that women in the 1950s and after have felt "impotent and alone during the moments of their great physical task of bearing children." One woman reported hearing a nurse say to a screaming woman in labor, "You had your fun, now you have to pay for it." As one might surmise, the author approves of the recent revolt against hospital births, which has resulted in a revival of interest in midwifery, the creation of birth centers, and the restructuring of birth procedures in the hospitals themselves. Strangely enough, Leavitt says almost nothing about the fairly widespread movement to have fathers present at births, a phenomenon that is not confined to middle-class couples, and which is usually promoted by mothers-to-be. Is that phenomenon an attempt by women to restructure and revive the old support network, this time with men rather than with women? If so, it tells us much about changes in marriage in America, as well as about changes in childbearing practices.

IF THERE IS anything amiss in this clearly written and persuasively documented book, it is its confinement, if I may use that word, to only the subject at hand. Not only are the implications of childbirth for the social definitions of women and men only narrowly explored; the question of why women's conceptions of childbirth have altered is hardly addressed at all. For it is clear that over the years women have come to have a quite different notion of what bearing a child means, just as they have come to perceive contraception and abortion differently. Moreover, for all Leavitt's quite proper emphasis on women's choices and decisions, it is strange that she never discusses women's choices and decisions *not* to have children, even though at one point she quotes a 19th-century woman who clearly wanted to have such a choice. "That trial of my womanhood which to me is so very bitter has come upon me again," this woman wrote in her diary.

> When my little Ellie is 2 years old she will have a little sister or brother. And this is the end of all my hopes, my pleasing anticipations, my returning youthful joyousness. Well, it is a woman's lot and I must try to become resigned and bear it in patience and *silence*.

I doubt that Leavitt's self-conscious awareness of women's losses would have

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carried much meaning for the 19th-century women, or even the early 20th-century women, of whom she disapproves for leaving the bedroom at home for the labor room at the hospital. I suspect, in short, that she finds more significance in what was happening to women in the 19th century than they did themselves. On one level this comes close to committing the historian's sin of anachronism. But on another level it is why we read history: to remind us that things have not always been as they are today. For it is stimulating, even liberating, to learn that our foremothers were in charge of births, even if they would not have thought about their behavior the way we do.

CARL N. DEGLER

Carl N. Degler teaches American social history at Stanford University and is the author of *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (Oxford University Press).

TRB, *from page 4*

Bowen and the other doctors would like you to think of such efforts as government interference in the "private" market. In fact, they represent the government finally attempting to play its proper role as the largest buyer in the medical market. A quarter of all doctors' fees are now paid by Medicare and Medicaid. Yet the government's method of paying doctors makes the Pentagon's bloated military procurement system look ruthless. So many factors give doctors the power to raise their prices (which increased eight percent a year *beyond inflation* between 1975 and 1985). Why shouldn't the government, like any other sensible customer, use its market power to hold prices down?

The administration's cost-control proposal doesn't go nearly far enough. The essential reform is to require doctors who want Medicare patients to accept Medicare prices. Right now, the government pays 80 percent of a set fee, but doctors are free to charge their patients more than the remaining 20 percent, and most do so. This, more than anything else, has been the engine of inflation in doctors' fees.

The doctors argue that what they charge patients over and above Medicare reimbursements is none of the government's business. But it is. Medicare is supposed to benefit patients, not doctors—the nation's most affluent job group. Yet the fact that Medicare is picking up most of the tab obviously enables doctors to charge more than they otherwise would. That's especially crazy since the higher rate then gets factored into setting next year's Medicare reimbursement levels. (These had been frozen for two years, but the freeze ended January 1.)

The issue isn't "price controls." No doctor is forced to take Medicare patients. The medical establishment asserts that Medicare patients would not be able to find doctors willing to serve them under such a system, but this is largely bluff. There's a growing doctor glut. As of 1981 (the most recent figures) the average doctor was getting $27,500 a year from Medicare, and that number has surely risen. Not many doctors will willingly abandon a quarter of their market.

Starting January 1, 1987, the government will impose a four percent penalty on doctors who refuse to accept Medicare rates as full payment. Even this is too much for the American Medical Association, which is suing, and for Dr. Bowen, who is publicly distancing himself from this tiny reform. The AMA has come a long way since the days when it hired Ronald Reagan to denounce Medicare as socialized medicine.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

farm subsidies, before he loses steam in a laundry list of the hazards and difficulty of farm life ("The Idiocy of Rural Life," December 8).

Pasley's statistics take him out of the argument that the family farm has ceased to exist. If subsidies are not an answer to the farm crisis, let him propose one.

WILLIAM W. GORDEN JR.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

To the editors:
As a livestock veterinarian, I was confused after reading the cheap shot by Jeffrey Pasley concerning the plight of medium-sized family farms. The subliminal message that kept flashing through the facts and figures was, "Attention sophisticated, urban TNR readers! Rest assured that any farmer who tries to stay on the family farm and endures the hardships and dangers I catalog is too dumb for you to be concerned about."

Most of these farmers have freely chosen the family-farm lifestyle and are mightily disturbed by the current threats to their chosen existence. Many of them would have been happy to tell him about the benefits and gratifications of rural life if he had troubled to ask them.

DAVID M. SHERMAN
Associate Professor
College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, Minnesota

To the editors:
I was raised on a farm in a small rural community, and still live there. Pasley is correct when he says "... the standard image of the farmer has more to do with urban romanticism than with reality." As much as I admire some qualities of the American farmer, his inability to accept sound financial advice and his utter contempt for realistic economics is disturbing.

Here in Oklahoma wheat country, Reagan conservatism dominates political thinking—until it comes to farm policy. Then, and only then, is government support (welfare) acceptable. It has never been the business of government to subsidize failure; and continually propping up farmers who have mismanaged their finances is doing precisely that.

THOMAS D. SCHWARTZ
Kingfisher, Oklahoma

HUMBUG ZEAL

To the editors:
Mickey Kaus's screed about *New York* magazine's issue on volunteerism was worthy of Scrooge ("Up from Altruism," December 15). In his zeal to bash mush-minded liberals and needle Mario Cuomo, Kaus manages to misrepresent nearly everything about our issue. It does not celebrate yuppies (the average age of the volunteers profiled is 43) or defend charity balls, and is quite clear-eyed about Ace Greenberg's fund-raising methods at Bear Stearns. The simple purpose of the issue was to encourage more New Yorkers to volunteer help for those in need and to tell them where to sign up. The response has been extraordinary. Kaus should read before he rants.

EDWARD KOSNER
Editor and Publisher, New York
New York, New York

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

On the Barricades

THERE ARE WHOLE WEEKS when I don't feel the lack. Weeks when it seems reasonable to wake up before noon, to collect a paycheck, to know couples who are lawfully wedded. Weeks when it seems appropriate to discuss art as a species of interior design and to neglect metaphysics entirely. These are the times when I almost forget I was a student. But there are moments when a dull ache fills me like the memory of a lost limb. Each climatic change has its corresponding academic ritual and each was missed in its turn. In September I couldn't shake the feeling that I'd neglected to register for classes; a week ago I awoke in a sweat, convinced I had missed a final exam in Etruscan poetics. Like any hardened con, my life "on the outside" is tinged with irreality.

NOW THAT THE FLAMES are out, pundits are sifting the ashes for the meaning of the Parisian riots. Thanks to the police who supplied the student protesters with a martyr (Malik Oussekine, 22, apparently beaten to death by the gendarmes), the demonstrations may have actually jeopardized Jacques Chirac's fawning emulation of American neoconservatism. Skimming the photographs of thousands of students filling the boulevards and of the fiery barricades in the Latin Quarter, the first emotion was envy. Is it remotely conceivable that American students could bring Washington to its knees, or that William Bennett would resign over the corpse of one troublemaker? It's when you read the fine print that the *esprit révolutionnaire* quickly subsides. In 1968 Paris's student radicals argued for pedagogical reform, but they were also angered by capitalist inequities, escalating militarism, and the Vietnam War. The ideology may have been sloppy, but the sentiments were noble. In 1986 the reforms are being proposed by the conservatives, who want to make admission to higher education more rigorous. Terrified by France's rising rate of unemployment, the students are agitating to retain their slice of the social wealth—classic interest-group politics. In retrospect, the riots of 1986 will be noted not as a resurgence of student radicalism, but as the death rattle of youthful idealism.

IN 1968 I WAS enrolled in a very calm kindergarten. But as an undergraduate I developed a fondness for the collegiate demonstration, a tradition that, at its finest, combined politics, fraternizing, and some needed exposure to the elements. Of course Washington has its own succession of protesters. Each cause gets its hour in the sun, from the farmers on their tractors to veterans in tattered camouflage to Iranians orating about how the Ayatollah uses Cuisinart technology to turn minds into sausage stuffing. Absent, however, is the general camaraderie and heightened theatricality of campus barricades. Perhaps this explains how I fell in with a group called Take Back the Night, whose evening marches are intended to counter sexual violence. The march began familiarly enough, with music, applause, and rhetorical excess. Standing in a small park beneath the glowering bronze countenance of Taras Shevchenko, "Bard of the Ukraine," a roster of speakers cogently linked the sexual harassment of American women to Jonas Savimbi, General Pinochet, Star Wars, and "the Reagan administration's refusal to get tough on pornography." One street corner prophetess went so far as to demand the release of "the hundreds of thousands of our sisters and brothers being held in prisons around the world!" (Starting with the rapists perhaps?) Soon we were marching toward Georgetown at a brisk clip. Most of the chants were familiar, but one feminist mantra ("Cut it out or cut it off!") had me looking nervously into the faces of my fellow marchers to see if they really meant it. My unease heightened when an emphatic woman with a megaphone, a black armband, and a Laurie Anderson haircut singled me out of the crowd. "Hey you, you MAN," she ordered with her mechanically amplified voice. "Get back with the other 'community members' [trans.: castràti fem symps] at the back of the line!" I hastily complied.

QUICK, WHAT IS THE most popular major on college campuses today? If you guessed English, history, or mathematics, go to the back of the class. According to a nationwide survey, business is the favorite course of study, drawing nearly a quarter of all undergraduates. (As compared with engineering, 11.7 percent, and philosophy, 0.1 percent.) In an earlier era, such students would have gone directly to work; now they are business majors. The triumph of business as an academic subject illustrates two "cultural contradictions" of Reagan-era capitalism. First, the bureaucratization that has reduced a college education to a credential. Second, the cannibalistic ethos that focuses all effort on redistributing wealth while neglecting the intellectual skills essential to wealth's creation.

I RECENTLY SAW *Sid and Nancy*, the filmic elegy to Sex Pistols' bassist Sid Vicious and his New Jersey squeeze, "Nauseating" Nancy Spungen, whom he apparently stabbed to death in 1978. The movie touches on the birth of a punk aesthetic now gasping its last. Aside from the predictable responses (yes, heroin is a nasty drug and, yes, I might have knifed Nancy myself), I felt a mixture of disappointment and regret. Disappointment at the shallowness of my generation's mode of revolt and regret that it was over before we Yanks knew what it was all about. The genesis of American punk illustrates the Marxist precept that art reflects a society's mode of production. Unlike England, where punk formed an identity for the despondent youth of the white working class, American punk was a symptom of leisure. (Authentic American proles prefer Springsteen's melancholy patriotism to spit and screams.) Punk's state-side disciples were drawn from suburban high schools and comfortable bohemia; their taste for nihilism owed more to ennui than desperation. Robbed of its class basis, American punk has always been more a question of fashion, either intellectual or commercial, than a revolt. This "punk" without punks, as Nietzsche wrote of European pessimism, is "still far too contrived and too little 'organic'—too much a pessimism of scholars and poets." America was clearly not ready for punk. The question is whether our culture is simply dawdling on the same path that England took or whether we have caught a glimpse of something new.

C. C.

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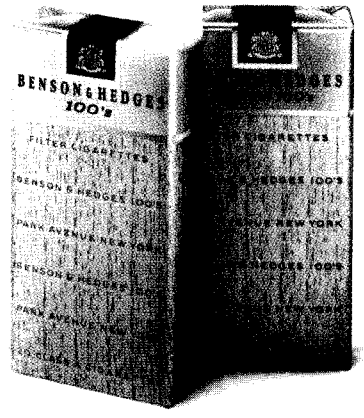

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